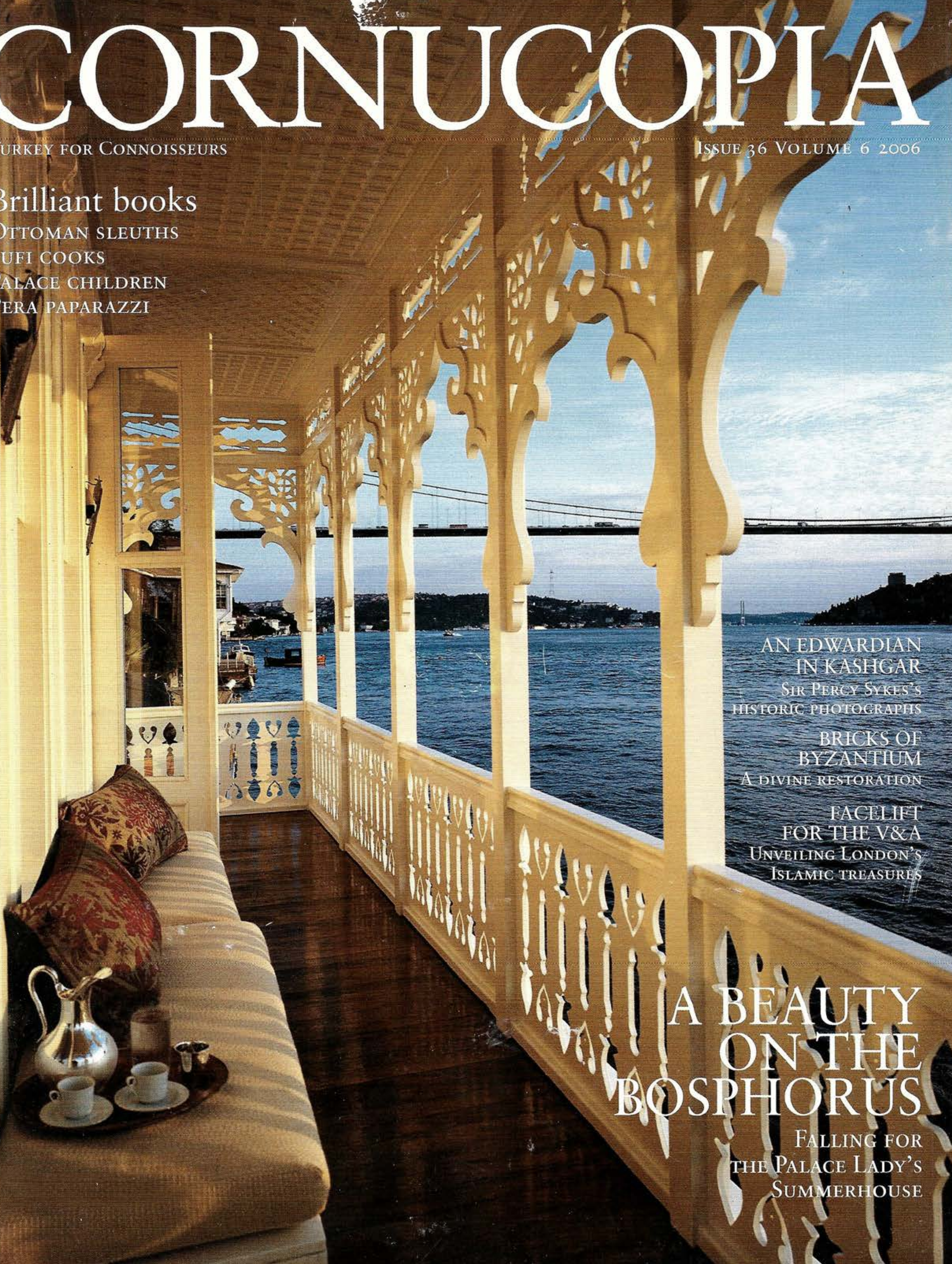

CORNUCOPIA

URKEY FOR CONNOISSEURS

ISSUE 36 VOLUME 6 2006

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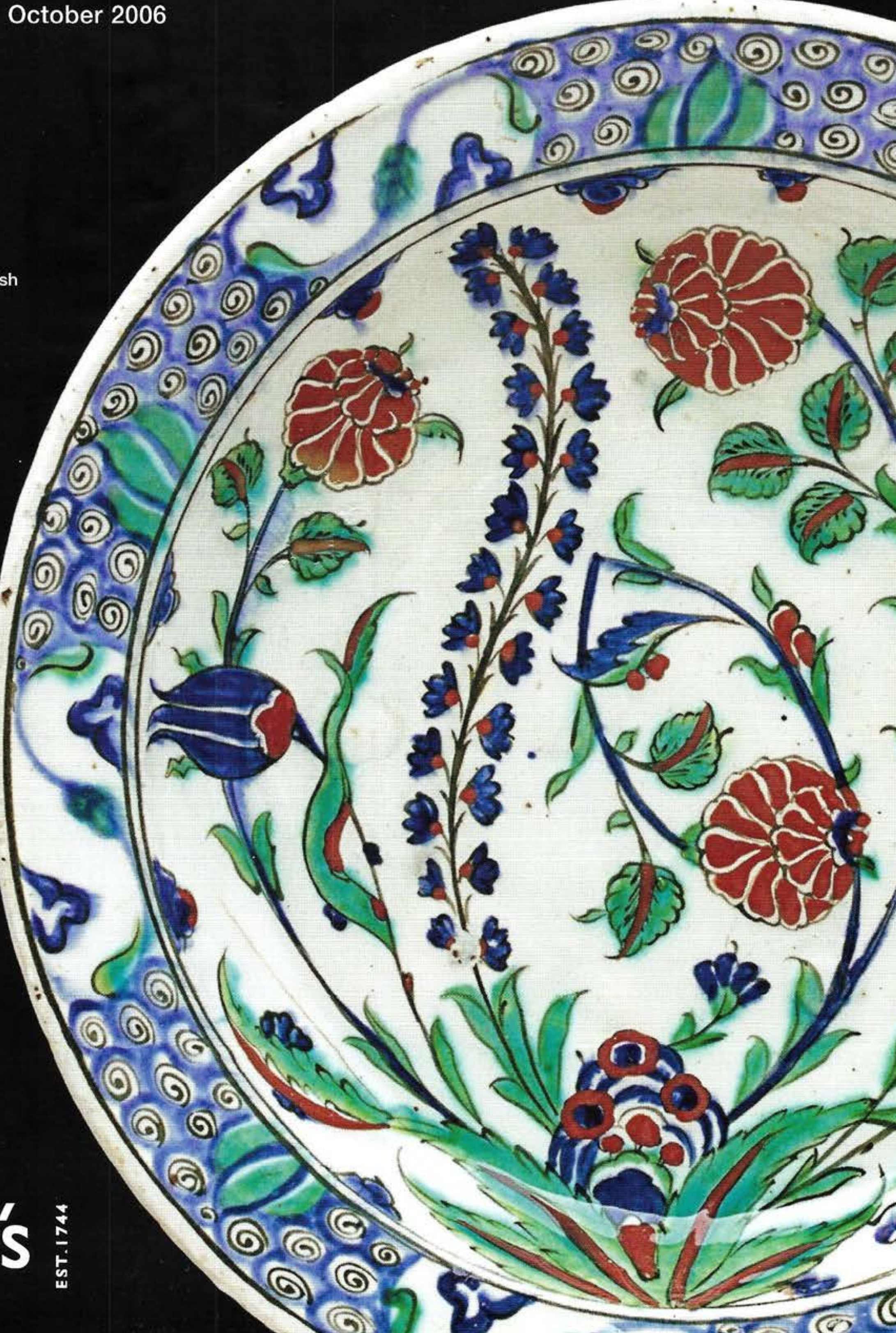
AUCTION IN LONDON 11 October 2006



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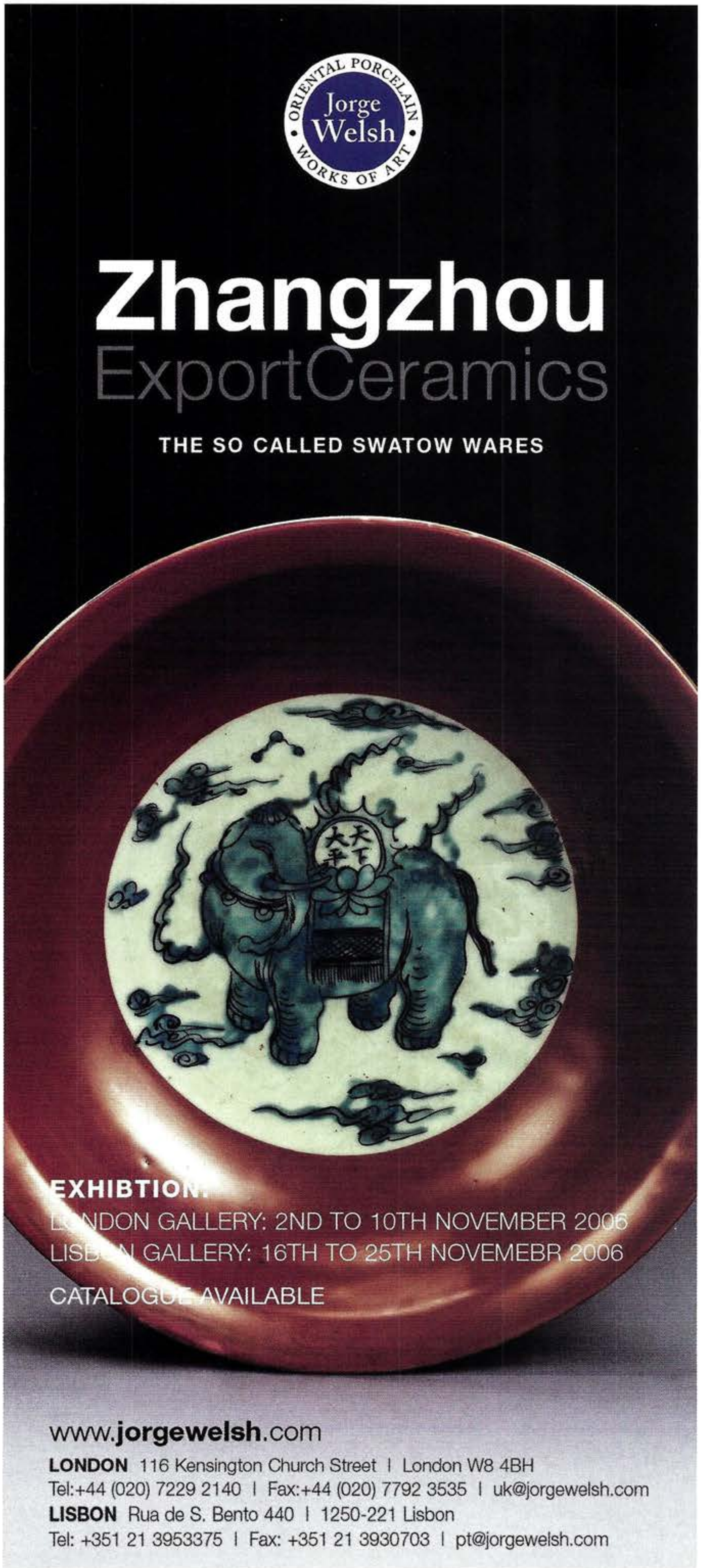
Cover: the Bosphorus from the balcony of the Ethem Pertev Yalı, Kanlıca. Photograph by Fritz von der Schulenburg



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Tel: +351 21 3953375 | Fax: +351 21 3930703 | pt@jorgewelsh.com

CORNUCOPIA
TURKEY FOR CONNOISSEURS
ISSUE 36, 2006

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR
Berrin Torolsan
EDITOR
John Scott
CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Clive Crook
ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Susana Raby
Hilary Stafford Clark
Roger Williams
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Andrew Finkel
Elizabeth Meath Baker
David Barchard
Rose Baring
DESIGNER
Kate Newman

COORDINATION
Emin Saatçı
MANAGING EDITOR
Gündüz Aydınlar

WEBSITE
www.cornucopia.net

Cornucopia © Caique Publishing Ltd,
1 Rutland Court, Edinburgh EH3 8EY, Scotland,
and Kayık Yayıncılık ve Turizm Ticaret Ltd Şti,
PK191, Teşvikiye, 34368 Istanbul
Printing: St Ives plc
Colour Separation: Wyndeham Argent Ltd
UK publisher: Caique Publishing Ltd,
a member of the Periodical Publishers Association.
Distribution in Turkey:
Kayık Yayıncılık ve Turizm Ticaret Ltd Şti

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Enquiries and address corrections:
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Turkey
PK191, Teşvikiye, 34368 Istanbul
cornucopia@atlas.net.tr
Tel & fax: +90-212 248 3607

United Kingdom
P.O. Box 13311, Hawick TD9 7YF, Scotland
subscriptions@cornucopia.net
Tel +44(0)1450 379933 Fax +44(0)1450 379988

USA and Canada
P.O. Box 5, Dundee, OR 97115, USA

ADVERTISING
Turkey
Tel & fax: +90-212 248 3607

Worldwide
Tel +44(0)20 7792 2377 Fax +44(0)20 7792 5442
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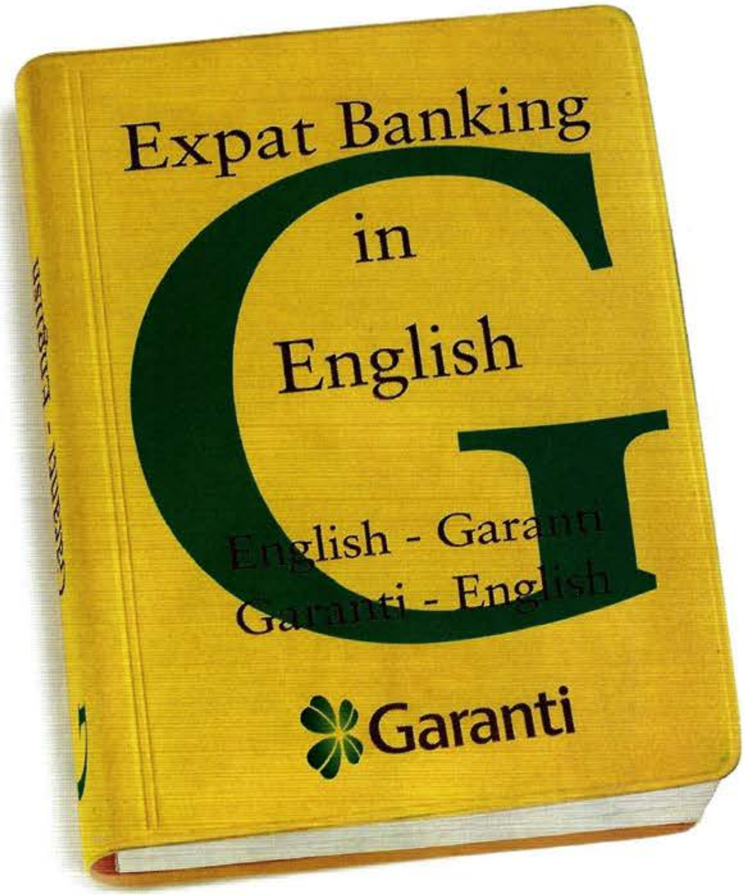
The Latin *cornu copiæ* or 'horn of plenty', a horn overflowing with flowers, fruit and corn; symbol of prosperity and abundance in the cities of Anatolia.

ISSN 1301-8175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ART BOOKS SPECIAL

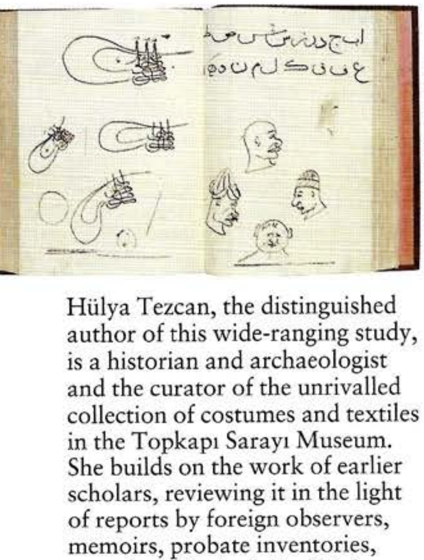
CONNOISSEUR

CHILDREN IN THE PALACE OF THE SULTANS; EARLY PHOTOGRAPHS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, A HOARD FROM THE HERMITAGE... AND A MILLION-POUND MINIATURE

Images of childhood

BY JM ROGERS

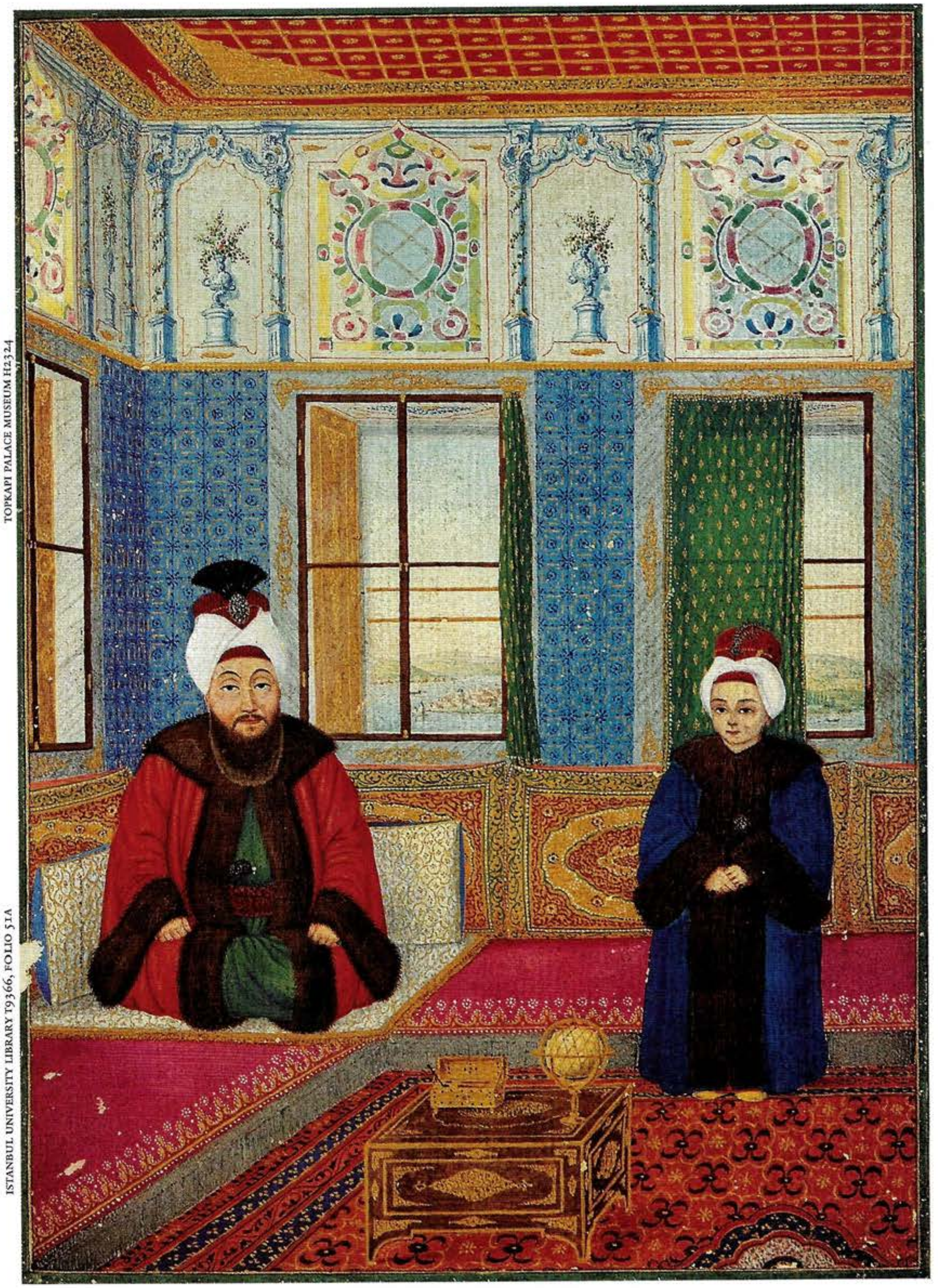
Children of the Ottoman Seraglio: Customs and Costumes of the Princes and Princesses
By Hülya Tezcan
Translated by Carol La Motte
Aygaz, Istanbul, 2006



TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM H2324

Hülya Tezcan, the distinguished author of this wide-ranging study, is a historian and archaeologist and the curator of the unrivalled collection of costumes and textiles in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum. She builds on the work of earlier scholars, reviewing it in the light of reports by foreign observers, memoirs, probate inventories, records of the *kadıs*' judicial courts, photographic albums and, of course, museum collections inside and outside Turkey, to give an encyclopaedic account of rites of passage in the sultans' palace. Moreover, by bringing her account up to the early twentieth century, she graphically illustrates the impact of Westernisation on

RIGHT: SULTAN MUSTAFA III AND HIS SON, PRINCE SELIM, LATER SELIM III. ATTRIBUTED TO THE COURT PAINTER REFAIL, C1757–89 (ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY). TOP: MEHMET THE CONQUEROR'S SKETCHBOOK, C1440 (TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM)



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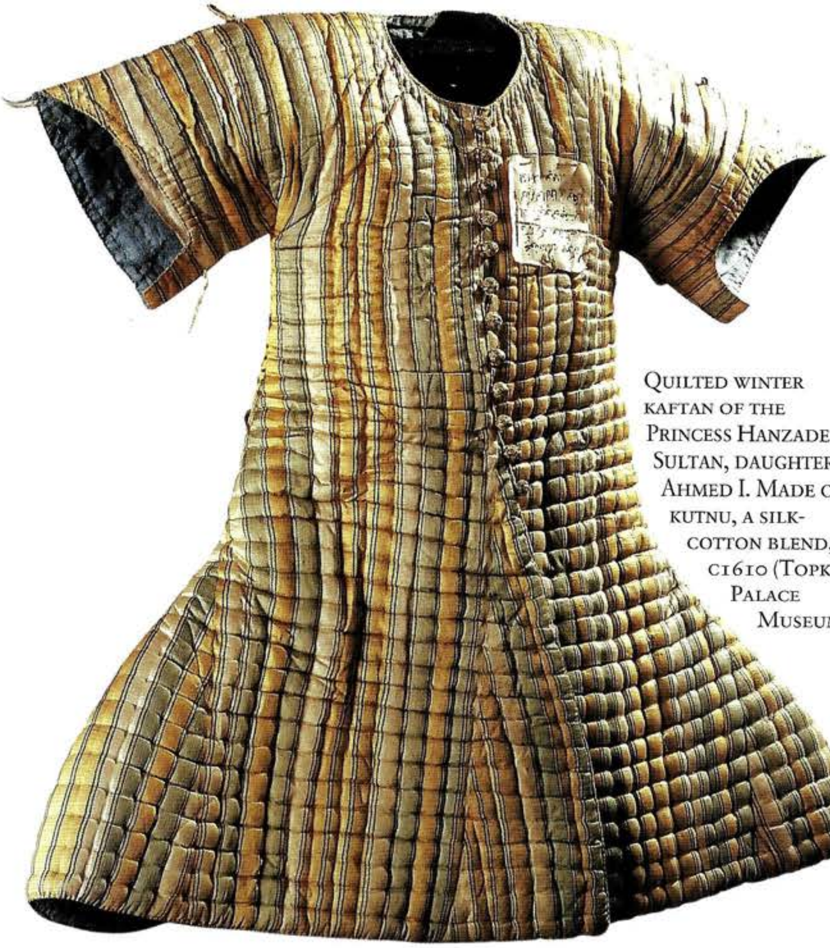


QUILTED WINTER KAFTAN OF THE PRINCESS HANZADE SULTAN, DAUGHTER OF AHMED I. MADE OF KUTNU, A SILK-COTTON BLEND, C1610 (TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM)

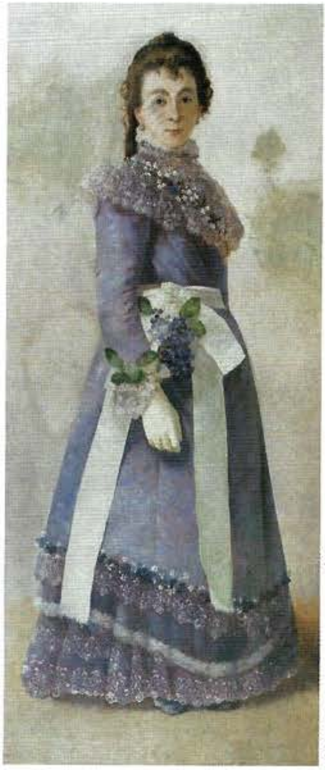
the later Ottoman Empire, which radically affected life in the palace in virtually every respect.

The core of the book is a study of the children's costumes in the Topkapı Sarayı which, Professor Tezcan interestingly observes, took little account of gender or cut. This suggests that, as elsewhere in Europe, children's formal costume was viewed as a form of dressing up. One puzzle, however, is their generally pristine state, which, while rightly discounting the possibility that heavy silks could ever have been laundered, she attributes to their being so rarely worn.

But small children are very messy: even barely worn garments could easily have been soiled, and some form of dry-cleaning, perhaps with fuller's earth, must have been used. Interestingly, in a list of palace craftsmen of 1526 the wages of the launderers compare very well with those of the most highly skilled corps, such as the jewellers, which suggests that they were not labourers but skilled specialists.

The book is exceptionally well-produced, and the only reservation I have is the faceless mannequins, which to an adult eye are rather worrying. The illustrations are of excellent quality and the book is yet another feather in the cap of Ömer Koc's generous cultural patronage. ◆

JM Rogers is honorary curator of the Nasser D Khalili Collection of Islamic Art



TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM 17/667

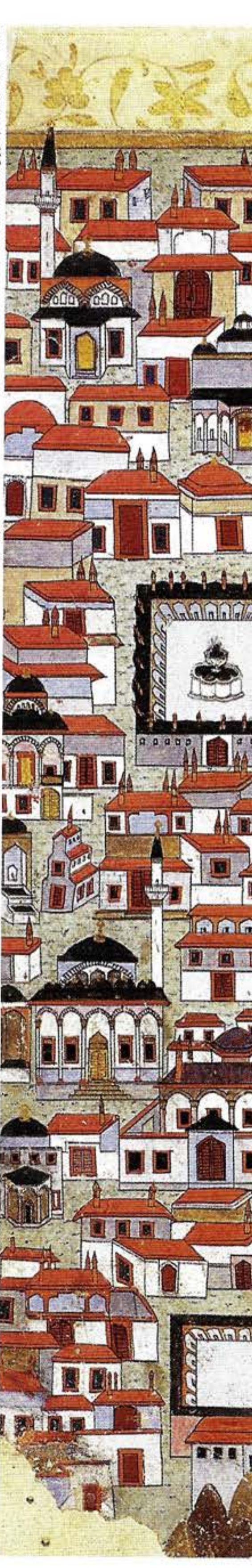
TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM 13/2153/2154

OPPOSITE: A PAINTING (C1595–1600) OF THE SERAGLIO IN THE AEGEAN CITY OF MANISA, WHERE FUTURE SULTANS WERE PREPARED FOR OFFICE. FROM THE BOOK ŞEHNAME-I ÂL-I 'OSMÂN BY TA'LÎKÎIZADE. LEFT: A LATE 19TH-CENTURY PORTRAIT OF NEMIKA HANIM SULTAN, GRANDDAUGHTER OF ABDÜLHAMIT II, BY SALVATORE MALORI. RIGHT: A WOOLLEN SUIT (TROUSERS, WAISTCOAT, JACKET, OVERCOAT) MADE FOR THE TWO-YEAR-OLD ÂBID EFENDI, SON OF ABDÜLHAMIT II, BY PAOLO PARMA, THE COURT TAILOR, IN 1907. TOP RIGHT: THE TAILOR'S LABEL

TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM 8/497

RIGHT: CORNUCOPIAS OF WISDOM, A 19TH-CENTURY GILTWOOD, BRASS AND VELVET BOOKREST (TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM)

TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM 13/275



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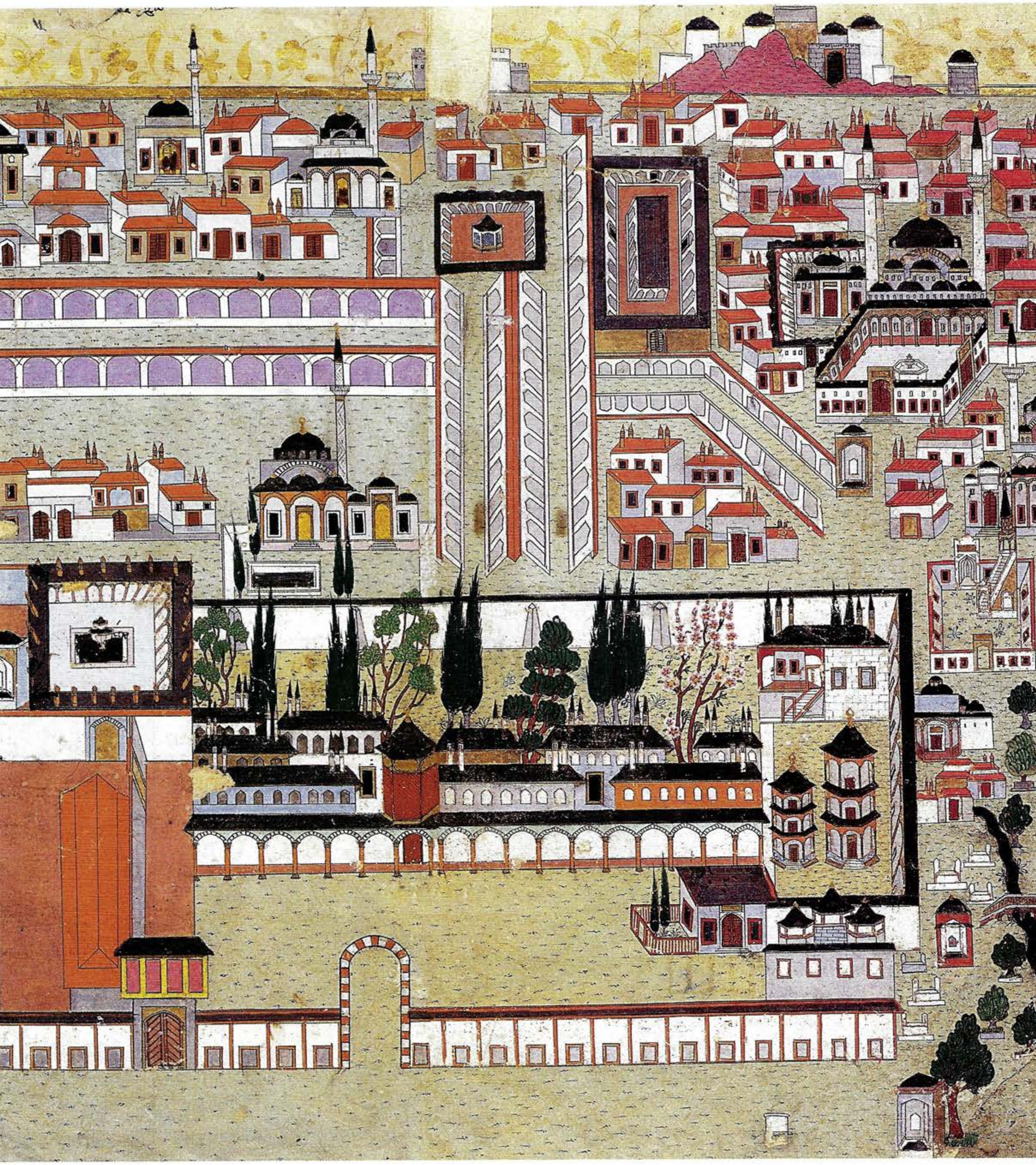


Through Ottoman eyes

BY ROLAND BELGRAVE AND STEFANO TAGLIA

The Photographers of Constantinople
By Bahattin Öztuncay
Aygaz, Istanbul, £149

201. Groupe de Dames Turcs
P. Sébah

Istanbul in the second half of the nineteenth century became both training ground and inspiration for the emerging artists of photography, Ottoman and foreign alike. For any European traveller, exotic Istanbul was a first stop on the way to the Orient, and many a fledgling photographer fell under its spell, among them such legends-to-be as James Robertson, Felice and Antonio Beato, Carlo Naya and Tancrède Dumas. All stayed on to hone their photographic skills while exploring the city.

This comprehensive history of photography in the Ottoman Empire gives cosmopolitan Istanbul the prominence it deserves. The first of its two volumes offers an overview of the invention of photography – from the *camera obscura* in the eleventh century, to the salt prints and daguerreotypes eagerly adopted by the Ottoman Empire in the liberal climate of the 1839 Tanzimat reforms.

Öztuncay pays tribute to the great early names: Charles Nègre, James Robertson, Roger Fenton, Miner Kilbourne Kellogg, Félix Bonfils and Charles Gérard – whose work, admittedly clichéd, supplanted the West's earlier fanciful view of the East. Many of these photographers opened studios in Pera, the European centre of the capital, from where they went on to explore the wider city.

Öztuncay divides them by the techniques they used: calotype, daguerreotype, the albumen-coated glass plate method, the wet collodion process applied to the *carte-de-visite* format, and the stereoscopic method.

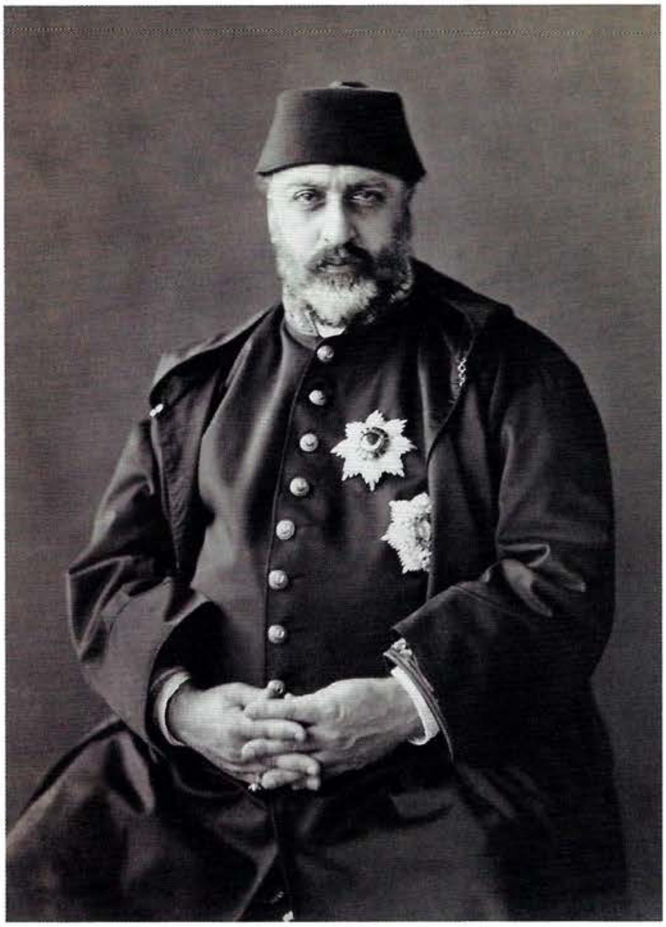
Grand master of the salt print was James Robertson, chief engraver at the Ottoman mint and one of many foreign photographers close to the Ottoman establishment. Robertson is interesting because his work encompassed war photography as well as painterly Istanbul scenes. His reputation was sealed in Crimea, where he photographed exhausted troops and witnessed the fall of Sebastapol in 1855. Felice Beato, his brother-in-law, who worked with Robertson in Crimea, was a gifted adventurer who soon moved on from photography in Istanbul to capture the horrors of the Indian Mutiny, becoming the father of photojournalism with his unflinching depiction of the dead. (Constrained by British censors, Robertson had no such freedom: there is not a corpse in sight in his war photographs.)

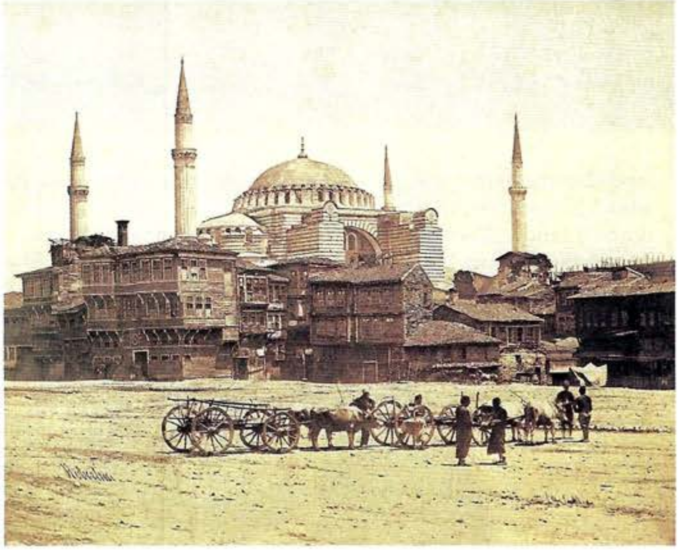
In the Ottoman Empire, interest in photography started at the very top. People and places the length and breadth of the empire were recorded at the behest of the sultans, who were passionate about the new art form, sitting for their portraits and allowing their daughters to pose, too. Crown Prince Vahdettin even took lessons in photography from an Ottoman Greek, Nikolaos Andriomenos.

They also nurtured local talent. Foremost among the Istanbul-born photographers, who won awards both at home and abroad, were the Abdullah Frères. These three brothers of Armenian origin had the most famous portrait-studio in the empire and exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867. Another major studio was that of Vassilaki Kargopoulo, an Ottoman Greek who, like Vichen Abdullah, became chief court photographer, though he also took pictures of street-sellers, scenery and monuments. His panoramas, Öztuncay says, are "unequalled in the history of Ottoman photography".

There were also Turkish photographers with military backgrounds who "countered the assertions of reactionary circles that painting pictures and taking photographs were prohibited on religious grounds". Among them was the "illustrious Chief Photographer of the Ministry of the Navy", Bahriyeli Ali Sami, a member of Abdülhamit II's secret police.

Although many a small studio boasting spurious medals did not survive, Öztuncay





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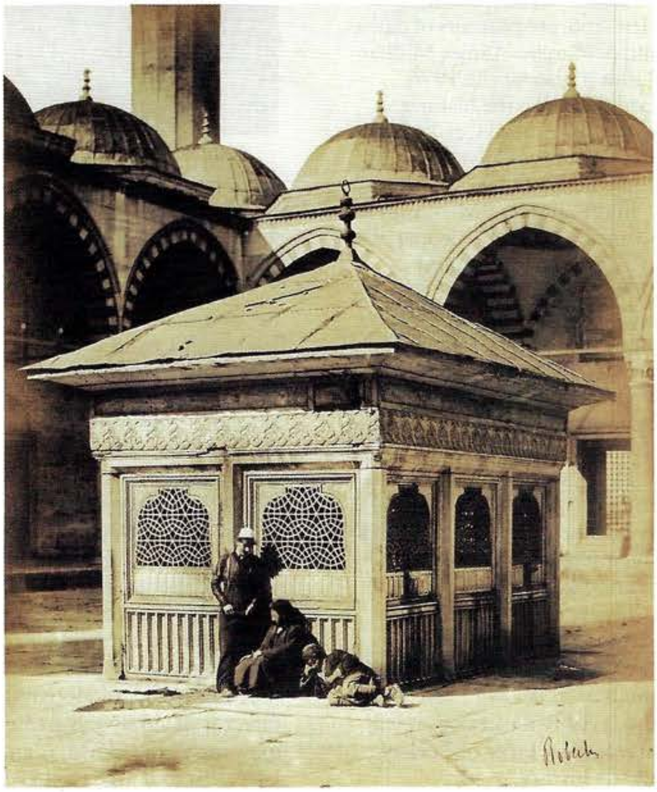


OPPOSITE AND TOP RIGHT: WOMEN POSE IN INDOOR AND OUTDOOR TURKISH DRESS AT PASCAL SÉBAH'S PROLIFIC STUDIO, C1870.
TOP: SULTAN ABDÜLAZIZ, AN ENTHUSIAST FOR PHOTOGRAPHY, PHOTOGRAPHED BY THE ABDULLAH FRÈRES.

RIGHT AND ABOVE: CLASSIC SALT PRINTS BY JAMES ROBERTSON, WHO ORIGINALLY WORKED AT THE OTTOMAN MINT AS AN ENGRAVER. THE SÜLEYMANIYE'S COURTYARD 1853, AND AYASOFYA, 1854 – THE WOODEN HOUSES OBSCURING IT WOULD SOON BE SWEPT AWAY explores those that left their mark. Pascal Sébah, a most influential photographer by the 1860s, exhibited in Vienna, Paris and Philadelphia. He owned a large studio where, for the tourist trade, he mocked up exotic images of "Turkish" women (usually, in fact, Greek). His work often illustrated scientific Orientalist books, but his sheer output compromised the quality of his work after 1875.

Bogos Tarkulyan was a portraitist who worked for Abdülhamit and on one occasion was called in to photograph the wreckage after a bomb attempt on the sultan's life by Armenian revolutionaries. His influence continued into the Republic period: his portrait of Mustafa Kemal appeared on banknotes.

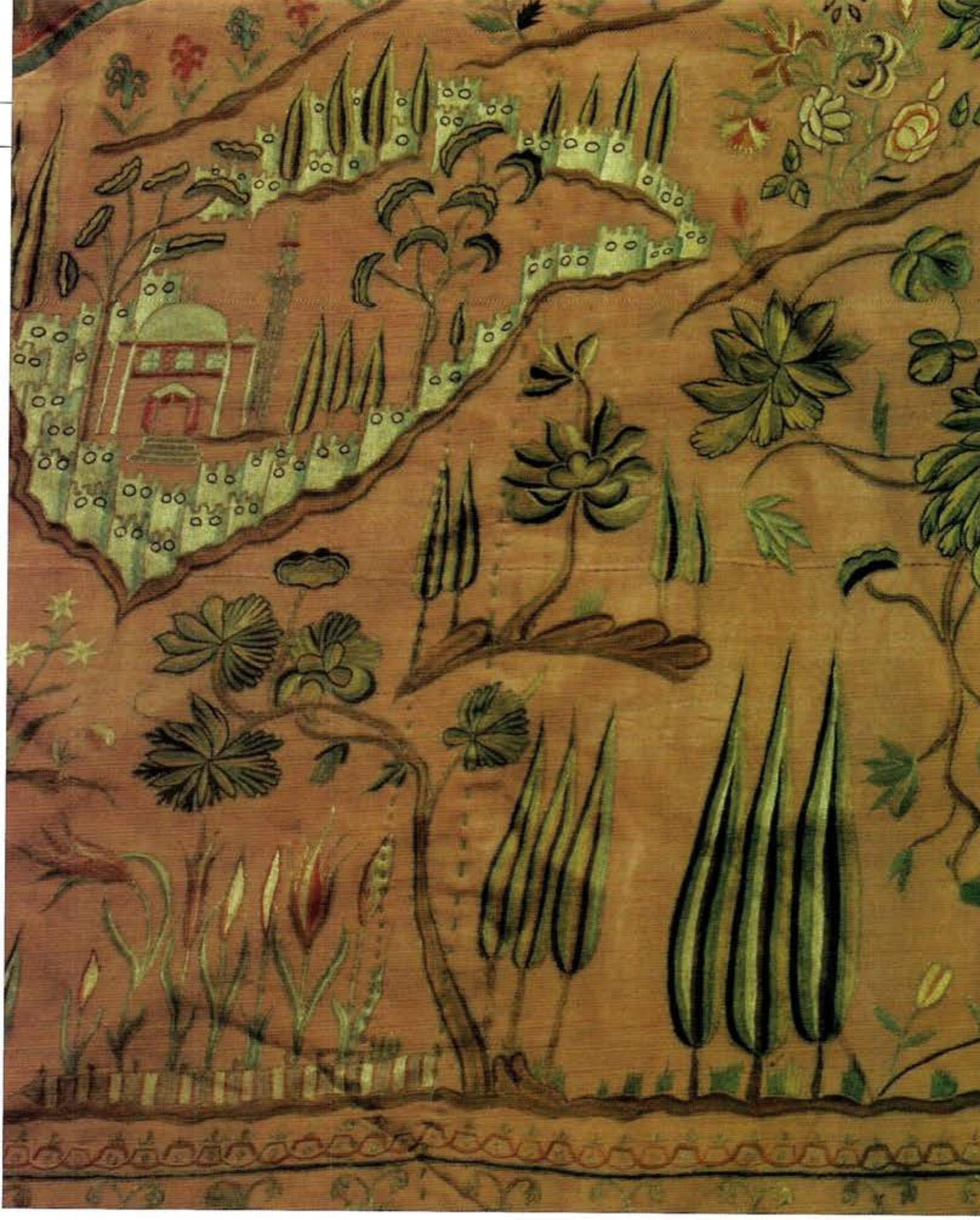
Another trio of Armenian brothers, the Gülmez Frères, who worked by appointment to Abdülhamit II, were known for landscapes and panoramas as well as portraits.

The high-quality work of all these studios is paraded in the second volume. There are ceremonial portraits of the extended families of Sultans Abdülaziz and Abdülhamit II. Here, too, are portraits of pashas and patriarchs: Ahmet Midhat Pasha (father of the 1876 Constitution), the historian-statesman Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, and Gazi Osman Pasha, hero of the Battle of Plevna.

In the chapter "Memories of a vanished world", people pose in Turkish costume, and Ottoman citizens betray their political allegiance by whether they dress *alla franca* or *alla turca*. Other images capture scenes of everyday life, palaces, mosques, fountains and the tombs of sultans and sultanas.

The book concludes with a series of views of the city and its European and Asian shores and a sequence of breathtaking panoramas.

This is a publication of extraordinary interest to historian, collector, dealer and amateur alike. Well researched and lavishly illustrated, it will engross any lover of Turkey and its history. ◆



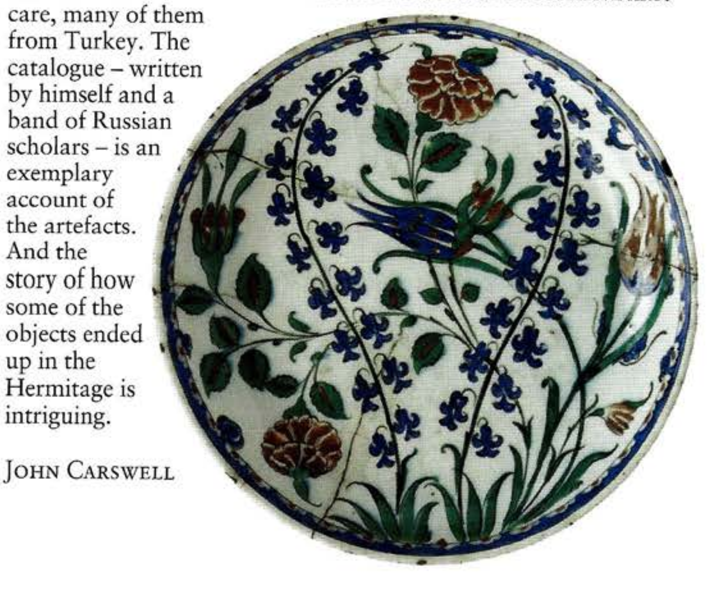
Hermitage in Edinburgh

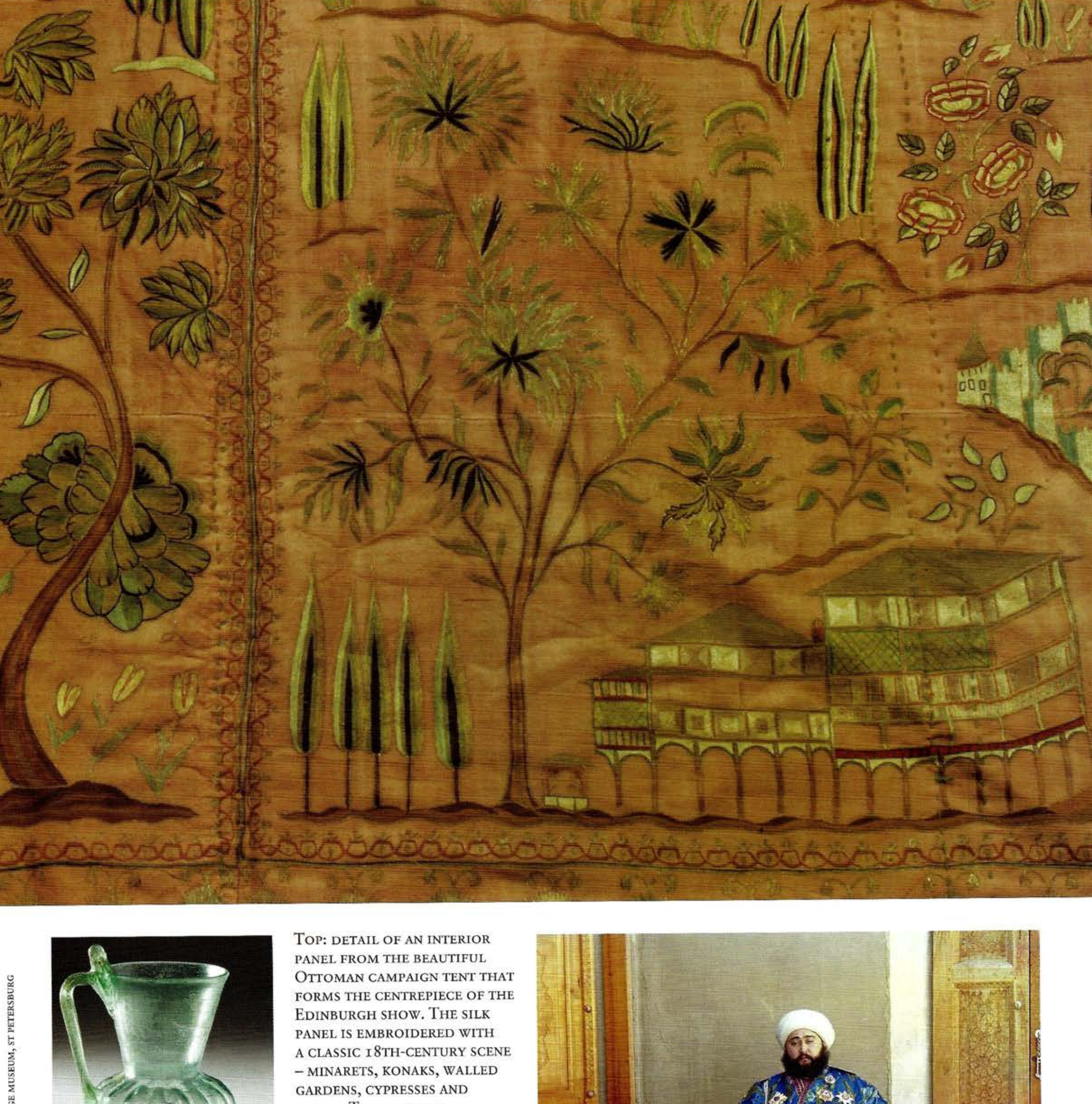
Beyond the Palace Walls: Islamic Art from the State Hermitage Museum, National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, £25

The exhibition from the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, *Beyond the Palace Walls* (at Edinburgh's Royal Museum, until November 5), is accompanied by a stunning catalogue. It is no coincidence that Professor Mikhail Piotrovsky, director of surely the greatest museum in the world, is an Islamicist and archaeologist, and that the exhibition should be devoted to the known (and unknown) masterpieces from the Islamic world under his care, many of them from Turkey. The catalogue – written by himself and a band of Russian scholars – is an exemplary account of the artefacts. And the story of how some of the objects ended up in the Hermitage is intriguing.

JOHN CARSWELL

A DELIGHTFUL IZNIK DISH (AFTER 1560), ACQUIRED IN 1925 FROM THE BARON STIEGLITZ SCHOOL OF TECHNICAL DRAWING, ST PETERSBURG, THEN EUROPE'S LARGEST MUSEUM OF DECORATIVE ARTS

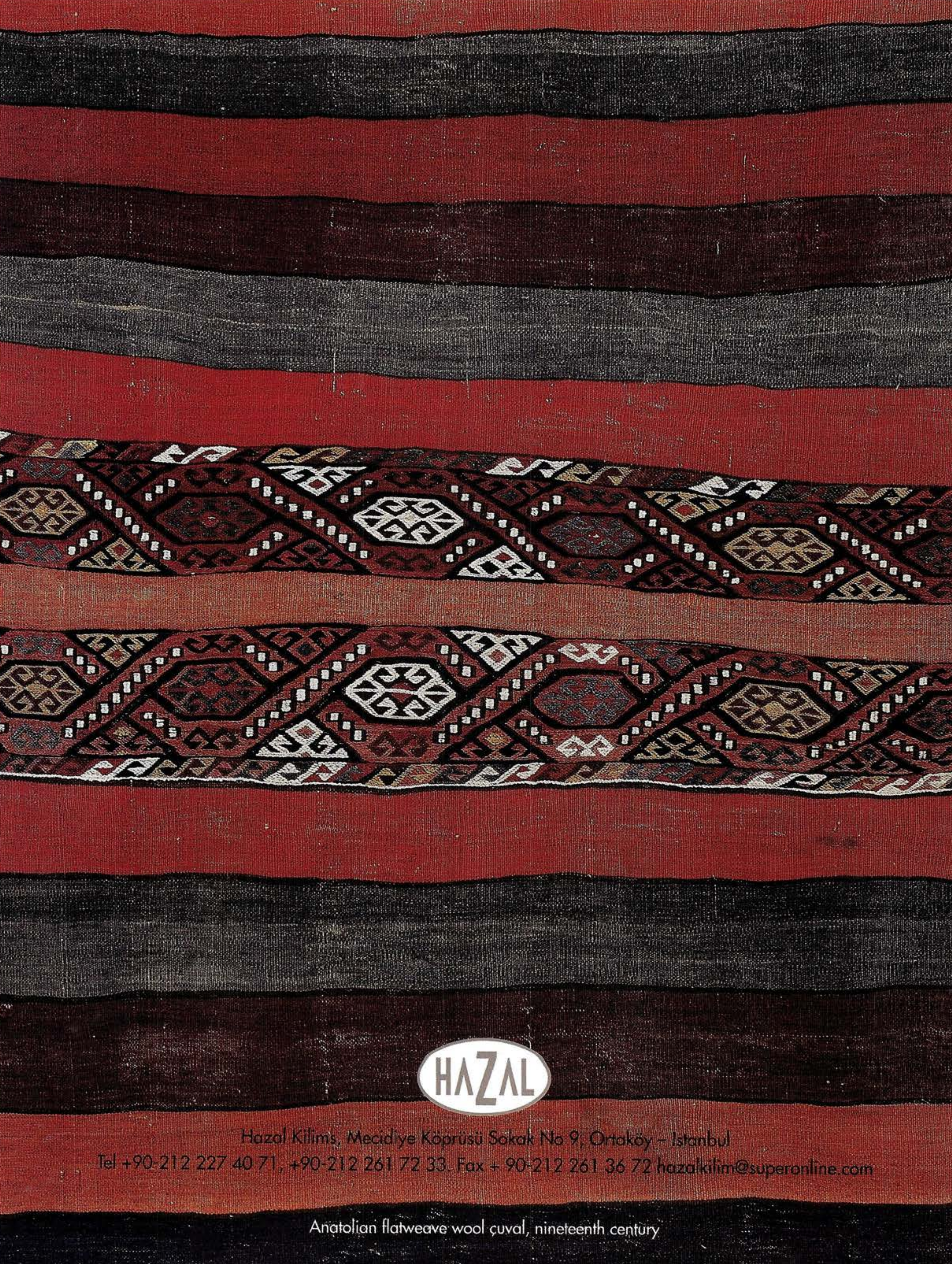




ABOVE: JUST 10CM TALL, THIS 10TH- OR 11TH-CENTURY GLASS JUG FROM UZBEKISTAN IS PART OF THE HERMITAGE'S HUGE COLLECTION OF CENTRAL ASIAN TREASURES. THE FLUTED BODY AND TRUMPET NECK EMULATE SILVER AND GOLD METALWORK

TOP: DETAIL OF AN INTERIOR PANEL FROM THE BEAUTIFUL OTTOMAN CAMPAIGN TENT THAT FORMS THE CENTREPIECE OF THE EDINBURGH SHOW. THE SILK PANEL IS EMBROIDERED WITH A CLASSIC 18TH-CENTURY SCENE – MINARETS, KONAKS, WALLED GARDENS, CYPRESSES AND TULIPS. THE TENT WAS PROBABLY SEIZED IN THE RUSSO–TURKISH WAR OF 1829–30; WE KNOW THAT IT WAS LOVINGLY USED AND PATCHED UP BY THE RUSSIANS FOR A DECADE BEFORE IT WAS ACQUIRED BY A MUSEUM. THIS IS THE FIRST OF THE MUSEUM'S OTTOMAN TENTS TO HAVE BEEN RESTORED AND REASSEMBLED. RIGHT: ABDULAHAD KHAN, THE PENULTIMATE EMIR OF BUKHARA, 1913

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST PETERSBURG



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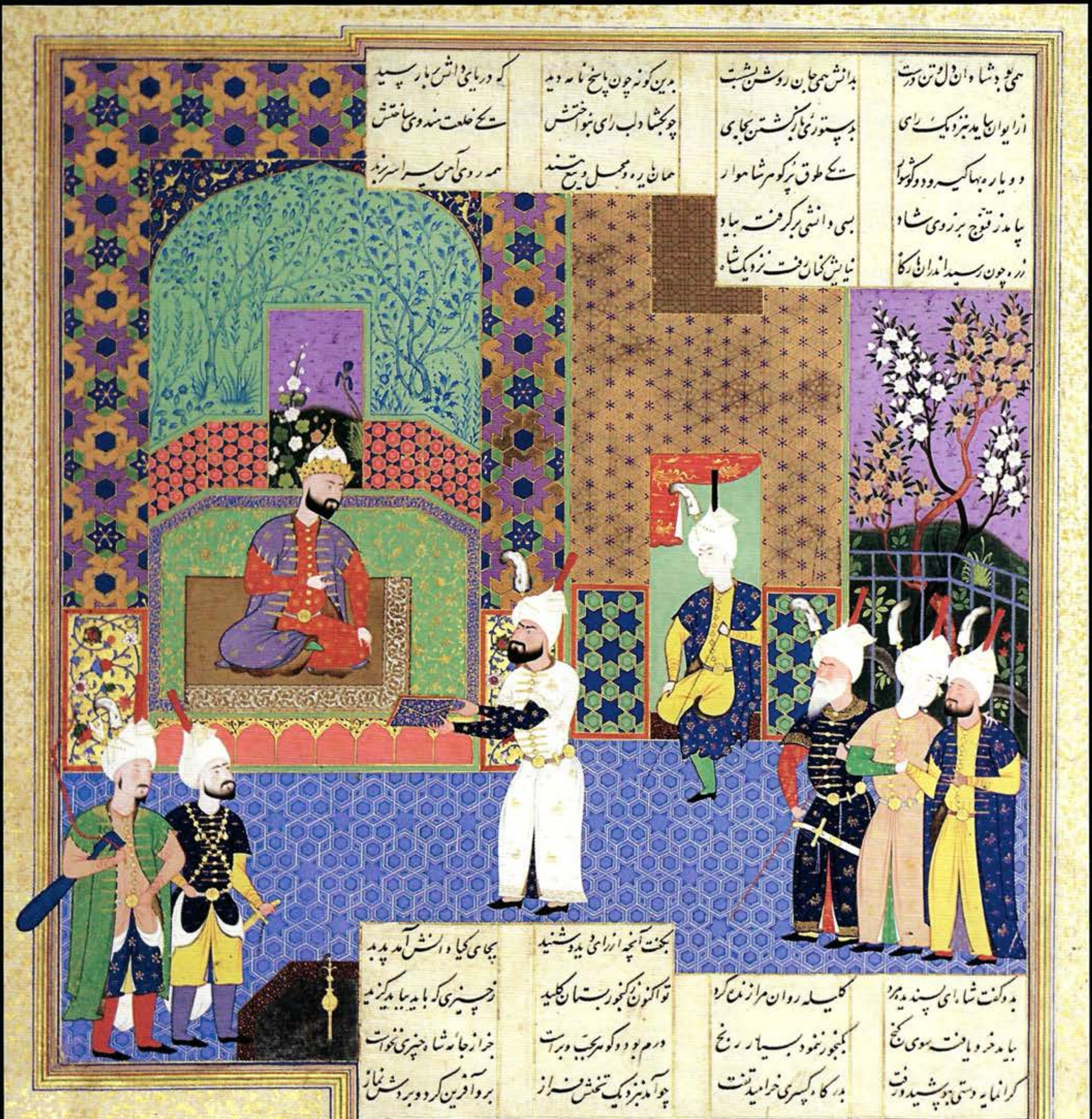
Anatolian flatweave wool çuval, nineteenth century



A leaf from the Book of Kings

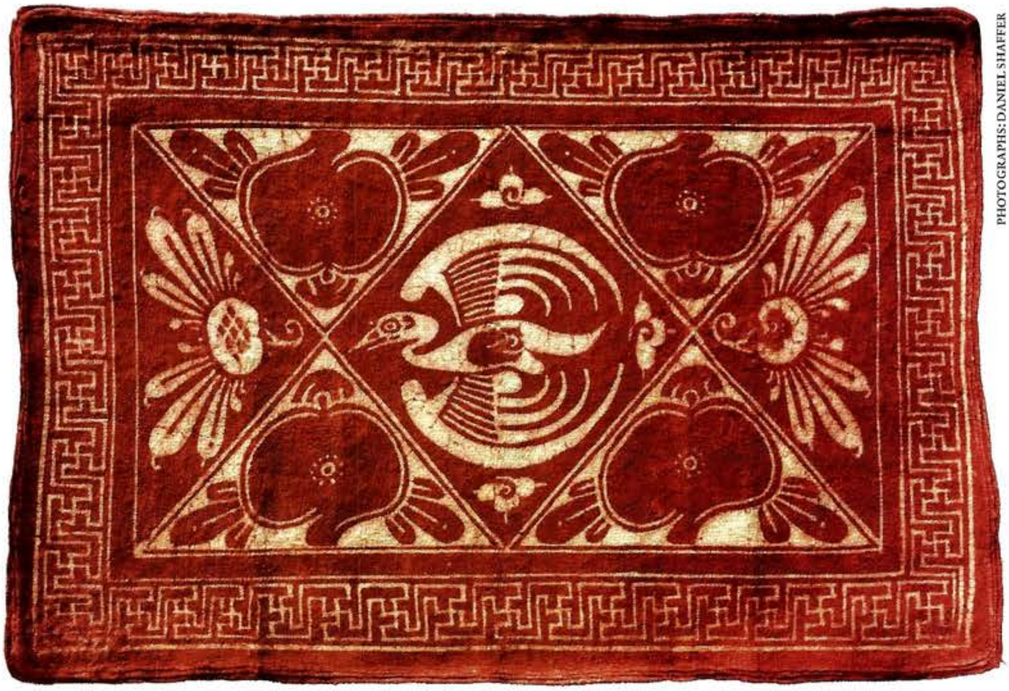
THE SHAHNAME OF SHAH TAHMASP: FOLIO 649, ATTRIB. TO AQA MIRAK, TABRIZ, 1530–40. ARTS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD, SOTHEBY'S LONDON, OCT 11

Coming up for sale is one page from the finest manuscript of all time, with a history as colourful as its illustrations. Begun by one emperor, it was finished after twenty years by a second, Shah Tahmasp of Persia, who gave it to a third, the Ottoman Selim II. By the1930s it belonged to the Rothschilds. The Nazis stole it and returned it. An American, William Houghton Jr, bought it and broke it up. And in 1993 the Iranians retrieved 118 of the 258 pages in a famous swap for a de Kooning on a runway. This folio illustrates an episode from the 11th-century epic poem by Firdausi in which the hero Burzay presents a book of knowlege and wisdom to the king. Estimate: £700,000–£1,000,000.

CONNOISSEUR'S DIARY

Think textile

By Daniel Shaffer

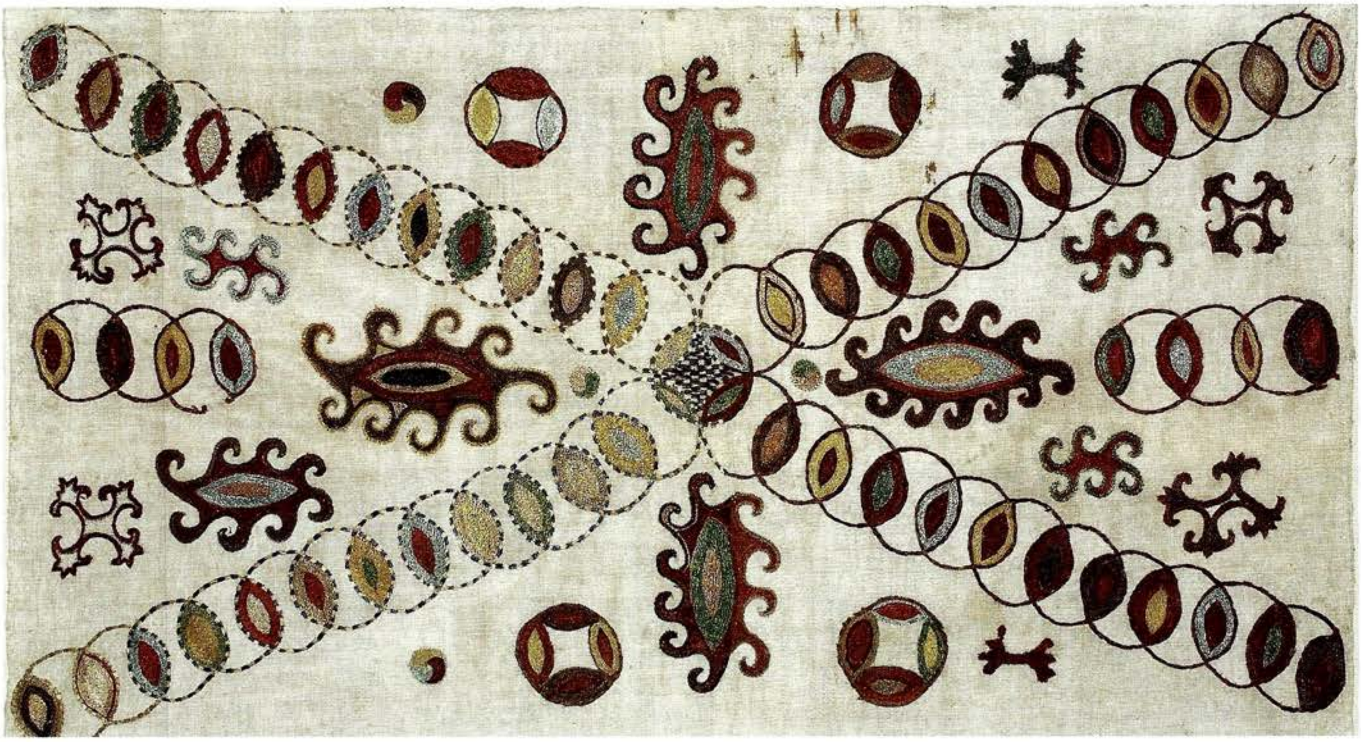


PHOTOGRAPHS: DANIEL SHAFFER

Textile art – court, city and country weavings from all continents and cultures – is on the up. A proliferation of international art and antiques fairs helps us in the West to grasp what has long been known further East: that textiles are among the first of mankind's civilising accomplishments and a foremost agent of cultural diffusion. And they are beautiful and generally accessible pricewise, at least compared to mainstream art.

With more than sixty specialists, the fully vetted Hali Fair, held in the National Hall at London Olympia each summer, is the most important of all the fairs. This year's, in June, was critically acclaimed and visited by significant numbers, who revelled in the colourful diversity of carpets, textiles and tribal art (www.halifair.com).

More recently, in a medieval *castello* in a remote part of the Po Valley, Sartirana Textile Art offered quality esoterica (www.belgioioso.it). And over the next few months we can look forward to a large display of carpets and textiles at the Bergamo Antiques Fair in January 2007, the highly enjoyable San Francisco Tribal and Textile Art Show in February, and in April – a highlight for Turkish residents and visitors alike – the fair linked to the triennial International Conference on Oriental Carpets (ICOC), taking place this time in the Swissotel Istanbul. Don't miss it! (www.icoc-istanbul.org).



Powerful patterns at the Hali Fair. Above: Mongol felt cover, 18th-century (Thomas Mond, Eliot, Maine). Left: Central Anatolian kilim, before 1800 (Galerie Arabesque, Stuttgart). Below: Kaitag embroidery from Daghestan, 18th or 19th century (Textile Gallery, London)

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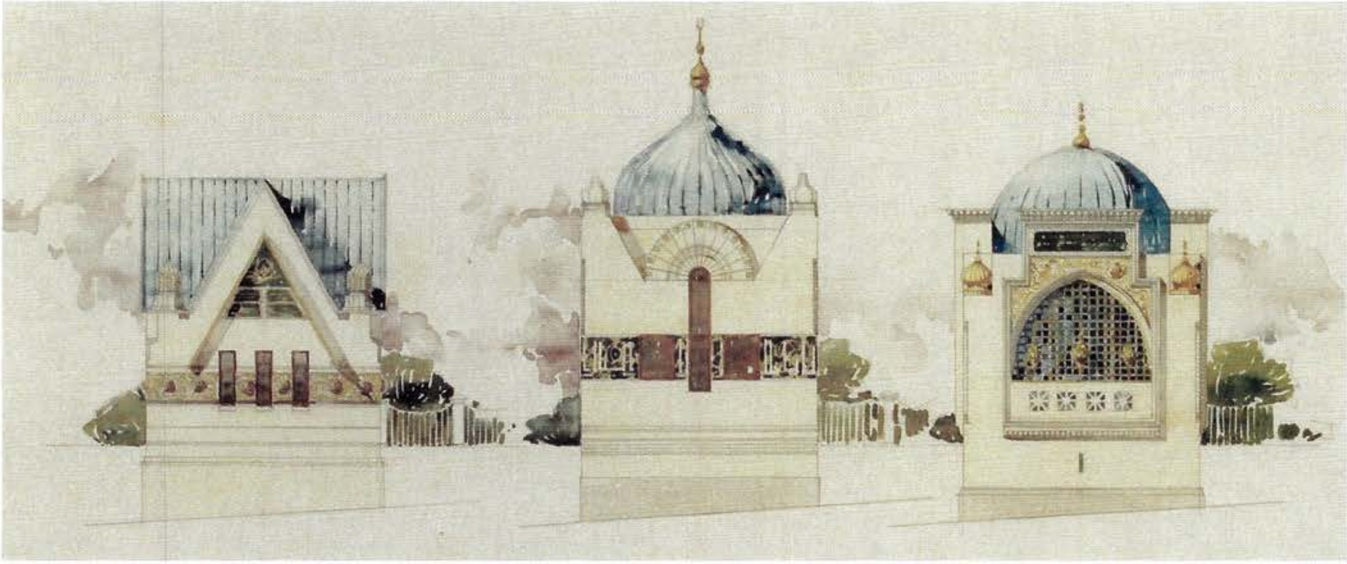


GALERIA D'ARTE MODERNA UDINE

Ottoman flourish

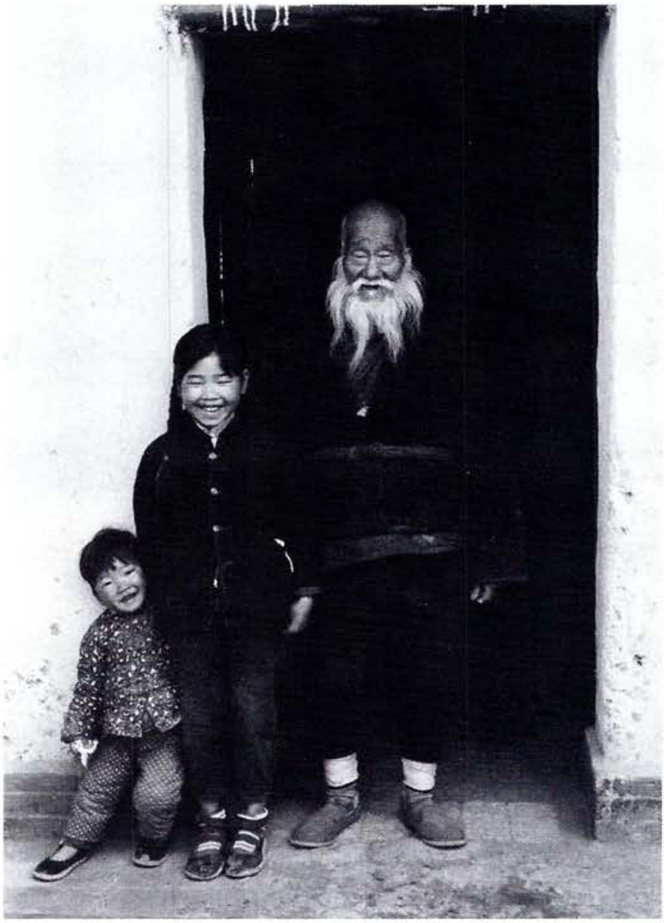
A forgotten pioneer of Art Nouveau, Sultan Abdülhamit's architect Raimondo D'Aronco (1857–1932) is the subject of an exhibition (and scholarly tome) at Pera Museum's new Istanbul Research Institute documenting his wildly inventive Istanbul projects, built between 1893 and 1909. (www.peramuseum.com)

JÜRGEN FRANK

Talking silk

BY JENNIFER SCARCE

The Ottomans lavished their patronage on the architecture of 14th- and 15th-century Bursa, their first imperial capital. But the city also flourished as a textile centre famous for its sumptuous brocaded silks. A browse in the old silk bazaars is still a joy. The Topkapı and Sadberk Hanım museums in Istanbul may have excellent displays of court dress, but Turkey also has a rich heritage of regional dress, which now has a fitting showcase in Bursa's Uluumay Museum, newly opened in the restored medrese of Şair Ahmet Pasha. Uluumay has worked tirelessly to save and record Bursa's traditions, helping restore the enchanting village of Cumalıkızık and encouraging the Folklore Society to collect local songs and dances. He has also steadily collected the costumes of the area. This museum, a long-held dream, displays 400 of them, with accessories such as the splendid belt above. (Tel +90 224 225 4813; uluumay@yahoo.com)



GÖKŞIN SIPAHIOĞLU

Scoop maestro

Right Time, Right Place (Istanbul Modern, until Nov 26) celebrates the career of Gökşin Sipahioğlu, the Izmir-born photojournalist who founded the Paris photo agency Sipa Press in 1969 and sold it in 2001 – all 30 million images. His great scoop came when he smuggled himself into Cuba to catch the 1962 missile crisis. This shot of a Taiwan family dates from 1965. (www.istanbulmodern.org)

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BOOKS

Nothing but the sleuth

BY ANDREW FINKEL

THE JANISSARY TREE
By Jason Goodwin
Faber & Faber, £12.99

THE SULTAN'S SEAL
By Jenny White
Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.99

BELSHAZZAR'S DAUGHTER
By Barbara Nadel
Hodder Headline, £6.99
(currently out of print)

SWEET CONFUSION ON THE PRINCES ISLANDS
By Lawrence Goodman
Adalı, £7.50

SOUR GRAPES ON THE PRINCES' ISLANDS
By Lawrence Goodman
Adalı, £7.50

Introducing Yashim, the Ottoman Detective
The Janissary Tree
Jason Goodwin
The Sultan's Seal
Jenny White
Barbara Nadel
Belshazzar's Daughter
Sweet Confusion on the Princes Islands
Lawrence Goodman
Sour Grapes on the Princes' Islands
Adalı

DETECTIVE LINE-UP: Yashim Togalu, eunuch by appointment, in *The Janissary Tree*. Kamil Pasha, a magistrate adrift in late-Ottoman crime, in *The Sultan's Seal*. Harried cop Çetin Ikmen, a sort of Inspector Columboğlu, in *Belshazzar's Daughter*. California boy Ed Wilkie in *Sweet Confusion*. And retired but ever-frisky, Lily Blum, solving life's absurdities by the Sea of Marmara in *Sour Grapes*

Istanbul: city of mystery. You might not think so commuting home in traffic, but a growing bevy of crime writers are using the city, past and present, as the setting for some pretty rum goings-on.

At the end of chapter one of Jason Goodwin's *The Janissary Tree* we learn that "Yashim was a eunuch". It is a revelation on a par with discovering that the Snark was a Boojum after all. Goodwin keeps a poker face as he guides us through what is – when you have a chance to think about it – a nonsense world of boiled corpses, harem girls and duelling-scarred Russian officers. It is 1836 and cadets in the Sultan's new fighting force – and the odd royal concubine – are dropping like flies. It falls to Yashim, a freelance eunuch (nice work if you can get it) to solve the mystery. Along the way he meets Mustafa the Albanian soup-master, Preen the transvestite, Yorg the pimp, and two (presumably post-modern) fire-tower watchmen, Orhan & Palmuk.

It is all what the film posters used to call "a romp". Goodwin has no truck with authenticity: the world he creates is full of atmosphere, painted with the best trope at hand and the odd brazen anachronism. He does, however, manage to evoke a stifled fury lurking in the shadows of Istanbul. The book is set nearly ten years to the day after the Auspicious Incident – the massacre of the corrupt Janissary legions by Mahmut II – and it looks as though this vengeful praetorian guard are about to strike back. One of best moments in the book is when our hero nearly meets his end in the tannery district, the threat to the realm a sulphurous menace lurking under the city.

Most sympathetic of his characters is Stanislaw Palewski, the down-and-out ambassador of what used to be Poland before its territory was swallowed up by greedy neighbours. "I am an ambassador without a country – and you a man without testicles," he waxes, even as he invites himself to Yashim's elaborately prepared supper.

Goodwin sets his eunuch up as man who isn't quite a man and therefore an invisible, professional outsider who can negotiate the demarcated boundaries of Ottoman society. He has an entrée not just to the harem but to the guilds and the great embassies.

The story canters on in film-treatment style (there are 132 short chapters) all the way to a Bond sound-stage-style finale. Thankfully Yashim has more going on upstairs than down as he picks his way through clues that have been scattered with a semiologist's care. The one unsolved mystery of the book is when the nubile but neglected Russian ambassador's wife (naked, of course, beneath her furs) commands the eunuch to "take me, Turk" and he does. But how?

Fast forward to 1886, when Kamil Pasha, a magistrate in one of the new secular courts, is called in the middle of the night to investigate the mystery of a woman's naked body washed up on the rocks by the Bosphorus. It belongs to an English governess in the employ of the granddaughter of the deposed Sultan, Abdülaziz. Stranger still is her one adornment, a pendant with the eponymous Sultan's Seal – the same inauspicious piece of jewellery found on the corpse of another British governess murdered some year's previously.

Jenny White, an anthropologist-turned-crime-writer, interweaves twin narratives of the two deaths linked by yet a third commentary in the form of letters home by Sybil, the feisty daughter of the British ambassador. The main story is told in the present tense, a slightly jarring device but one that suddenly makes sense when we realise the second story has been written many years earlier. It is told to us by Jaanan, daughter of a foreign ministry official, and her tale of coming of age in a late-Ottoman household is an understated gothic horror.

The Sultan's Seal is the first of a projected Kamil Pasha series, a dark tale that would appeal to the Victorian characters it describes. The eunuchs here are not cuddly Miss Marples but mutes with ripped-out tongues and dangerous eyes. White has a convincing feel for the late Ottoman period and, more than in any of the other books in this review, the setting rings true.

I suppose this also applies to Kamil Pasha, who, in bureaucratic fashion, sets out at full steam with good intentions but by the end of the book sits back to let the mystery resolve itself. This it does in a cascade of information and a cliffhanger – will he, won't he arrive in time to rescue *la belle* Sybil from one of those murderous eunuchs and a fiendish moving floor?

As Yashim the eunuch and Kamil the investigating magistrate wrestle for the title of Turkish literary detective *extraordinaire*, they might want to look over their shoulder at a third contender who has stolen a march. Inspector Çetin Ikmen, a policeman in today's Istanbul, has investigated over a dozen crimes in a series of airport-bookstore-style thrillers, their success emblazoned in silver-embossed letters on the paperbacks' spines.

To discover their appeal, I started with the first of Barbara Nadel's mysteries, *Belshazzar's Daughter*. Ikem joins a long line of sleuths (Morse, Reg Wexford, even Sherlock Holmes) who are a cut above the society they patrol and whose eccentric erudition is contrasted with the rough foil of a plodding sidekick. On the other hand, the book is not really a whodunnit.

The inspector does not so much solve the crime as follow its trail, and there is certainly no way the reader could be expected to puzzle out who did it. Ikmen's main role is to be the one character with whom we can sympathise.

Nadel is good at characters, and in this book most of them are nasty enough to qualify for group therapy with Patricia Highsmith's Tom Ripley. But if she gets under their skin she does not really get under that of the milieu they inhabit. I was eager for a book that revelled in the peculiarities of Istanbul, and while we can see Beyoğlu or Balat, the city is something of a flat backdrop for what is, let's face it, a pretty silly story. Nadel understands her limitations. Her suspects are Germans and White Russians, and that migratory breed, an Englishman teaching English abroad.

Another English teacher with a penchant for trouble pops up in *Sweet Confusion on the Princes Islands*, but the similarities with *Belshazzar's Daughter* end there. Lawrence Goodman's comic mystery is a cross between a Tintin adventure and *What the Butler Saw*. Ed Wilkie, a long way from his native California, comes to find himself in exotic Istanbul. This entails spending time choosing the right tie and being seduced by women twice his age and weight. He also has a dog (not a white wire terrier called Snowy but a bull terrier named Starleen), a mystery to solve, and the woman of his dreams just around the corner.

I preferred this particular form of mayhem to Goodman's second and more conventional mystery, *Sour Grapes on the Princes' Islands*. Minor characters in the first book, a retired American diplomat and his wife, step to the front to solve the mystery of a Hollywood B-movie actor found knifed to death in a Bosphorus beach hut. The pair are from a previous era: not only do they behave like William Powell and Myrna Loy in *The Thin Man* but they flirt outrageously – with each other. Goodman populates his book with a cocaine-juiced society girl, a fading film star anxious to kickstart her career again, a wealthy brothel-owner, an elderly businessman with a past, and a smug lawyer. They are all pretty unpleasant if you stop to think about it. But we're not meant to do that.

State of the union

BY DAVID BARCHARD

THE BRITISH AND THE HELLENES: Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850–1960
By Robert Holland and Diana Markides,
OUP, £55

TWICE A STRANGER: Greece, Turkey and the Minorities they Expelled
By Bruce Clark,
Granta Books, £20

THE REPORTS OF THE LAST BRITISH CONSUL IN TRABZON, 1949–1956
Edited by Christopher Harris
Isis Press, Istanbul, US$40

Forget about Lord Byron and all those vocal British Philhellenes who have come after him. The real story of British–Greek relations in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth is one of beautiful islands tormented by political tensions while luckless British officials battled manfully to keep order, like a schoolmaster struggling with an unruly classroom.

"The British never developed a conscious methodology for dealing with Hellenic irredentist claims. There was instead a constant improvisation…" write the authors of *The British and the Hellenes*. Hellenic irritation with the British took many forms. As early as the 1830s the British ambassador to King Otto's court in Athens was once forced, as a calculated snub, to stand through an entire opera.

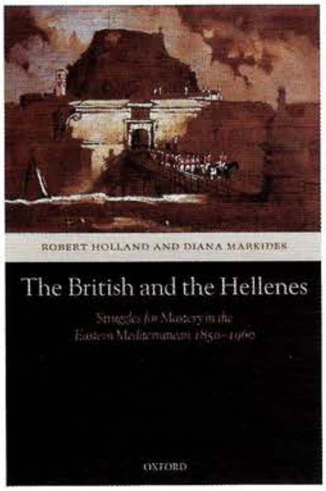
The tensions derive from the constant mismatch between Britain's hard strategic interests as a naval power in the Mediterranean and the remarkably powerful sentiments of Greek nationalism.

Robert Holland and Diana Markides concentrate on four British–Greek episodes over 110 years: the Ionian Islands, Crete, the Dodecanese after the Second World War, and finally Cyprus.

The story begins with the Ionian Islands, which Britain acquired in 1815. By 1858 it was growing clear that no representative institutions would work inside a British framework. That year Gladstone, one of the most ardent of Philhellenes, was despatched for a few months as governor. The story of his time as governor is little known and it is very well told here, including the episodes when Gladstonian dignity, unused to foreign lands, came slightly adrift. When the great man attempted a speech in modern Greek, his Greek audience politely supposed it to be English. On another occasion a courteous exchange of bows with a local bishop caused the two to bang their heads together.

After Gladstone's brief governorship in Corfu, it grew ever clearer that Britain would be forced to choose between repressing Greek nationalists or handing over the islands, something the nineteenth-century British Empire did not normally do. A revolution in Greece and the installation of a new king, aged only seventeen, from Denmark gave Britain the excuse to shed the burden gracefully by presenting the Ionian Islands as a sort of dowry for the young monarch in the summer of 1864. Strategic considerations were not overlooked. To prevent Corfu being used by other European powers, two large fortresses on the island were blown up.

Strategy probably also lay behind the British refusals in


ROBERT HOLLAND AND DIANA MARKIDES
The British and the Hellenes
Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850–1960
OXFORD

1828 and later to allow Crete to unite with Greece because it had the most important deep-water, all-weather harbour in the eastern Mediterranean. As long as it was Ottoman, it was effectively neutralised in European politics.

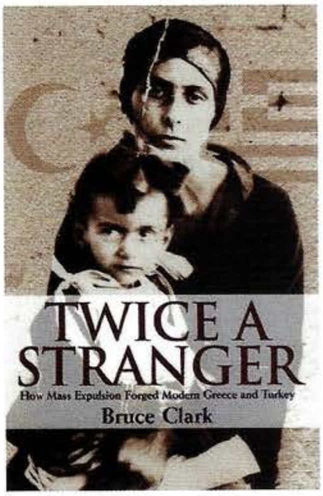
But in 1896 fighting flared up between the island's Muslims and its Christian insurrectionaries, drawing in the British and the other Great Powers. From the spring of 1897 to the end of 1898, Britain, France, Italy and Russia ran the island in one of the world's first international administrations. Yet again, unlike the French, Russians and Italians, the British appeared to be restraining Hellenic aspirations.

Instead of union with Greece, Crete got "autonomy", meaning it was ruled by a Greek governor nominated by the King of Greece but still not allowed to become part of Greece. Suspicions between the Great Powers, a British desire not to lose influence in Istanbul, and the problem of the safety of what remained of the Cretan Muslim population delayed the inevitable outcome. For a decade and a half, Greek demands for union were fended off by elaborate British diplomatic manoeuvres until the question was resolved by the Balkan Wars.

But the most complex and tragic story is that of Cyprus, where we still have to live with the failure of the independence settlement designed in 1959. As in Crete, the authors tend to downplay the problems caused by the mixed population of Turks and Greeks and instead emphasise British policy. "The final option for British policy..." was "to coax Turkey into the centre of the picture..." when "all other avenues had proved fruitless in the asphyxiation of Hellenic irredentism," write Holland and Markides.

The intricate story of these 110 years is handled with elegance and insight, though the perspective often seems distinctly Hellenic. The uprising of September 6, 1898 by the hungry Muslims of Candia in protest at being deprived of their last government jobs is described as "the Great Massacre of Candia", but the unprovoked massacres of larger numbers of Muslim villagers by Christians in cold blood around Sitia in early February 1897 receive only passing mention.

There are one or two small slips which might be corrected in another edition. As his name suggests – and as international law then required – Savvas Pasha (here called "Sawas"), governor of Crete in the 1880s, was an Ottoman Greek Christian, not a Muslim. Nevertheless this book is surely the definitive work on British-Greek relations before 1960.



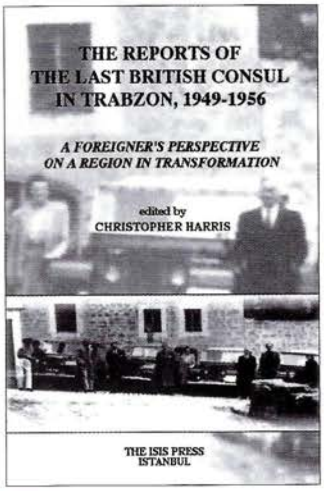
Bruce Clark's account of the *Mubadele,* or population exchange, between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s is a moving meditation about the ordinary folk of the two countries and the reasons why their states have institutionalised a combination of enmity and co-operation. It is enriched by interviews with elderly Pontic Greeks and Turks from Greece looking back at their childhood memories, many decades later, and remembering a vanished idyllic world.

Expulsion from one's homeland is a horrible experience, and those who suffered it in the *Mubadele* often tend to blame "the politicians" for what happened to them. Clark goes along with this explanation, pointing the finger at Venizelos and Atatürk and their desire to create homogeneous nation-states.

But the story is not quite that simple. The "mono-ethnic" state was actually a Christian invention. Even before Greece became independent in 1830, it had sought and obtained the approval of the Western powers to expel its Muslim population. After that, Muslims in Crete and the Balkans knew that Christian irredentism was likely to mean death or exile for them. One of the few things the short-lived first Republic of Armenia did in 1918 was to apply to the Ottoman government about a possible population-exchange.

Unlike the Greek nationalists, the Ottomans of the Tanzimat (1839–1871) explicitly built multi-culturalism into their political programme and, in my opinion, made a genuine attempt to honour their commitments. But from the mid-nineteenth century, and especially in the late 1870s and after the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, wave after wave of refugees was driven to Turkey from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Their descendants make up at least half of modern Turkey's population, and it is a pity that there is so little reference to any of this in Mr Clark's lucid account.

Some people may also wonder what horrors would have happened if there had been no population exchange.


THE REPORTS OF THE LAST BRITISH CONSUL IN TRABZON, 1949-1956
A FOREIGNER'S PERSPECTIVE ON A REGION IN TRANSFORMATION
edited by CHRISTOPHER HARRIS
THE ISIS PRESS ISTANBUL

In 1949, just over a quarter of a century after the exchange, Vorley Harris arrived in Trabzon, the last of a long line of distinguished British consuls in that town. His despatches, edited and published by his son, Christopher, give a vivid picture of the Black Sea and Eastern Turkey under the Turkish Republic. Though a villager in Vezirköprü remembers how his father met the young Lord Kitchener in the 1880s, there are few links with the Ottoman past. Fanaticism is a mild problem, but the government plans to cope with it by building Imam Hatip schools.

Like his nineteenth-century predecessors, Consul Harris spends much of his time with *valis* and *kaymakams,* but we are now in the twentieth century and the age of statistics and economics. Literary flourishes and local colour were discouraged by the latter-day Foreign Office, which is a pity, but Harris's despatches provide close-up detail of the region in a time of change which scholars and travellers will find invaluable.

Christopher Harris has done an excellent job as editor, adding factual information and writing an affectionate memoir of life in the consulate in the 1950s as an introduction. It all adds up to an invaluable addition to the literature in English on Eastern Turkey.

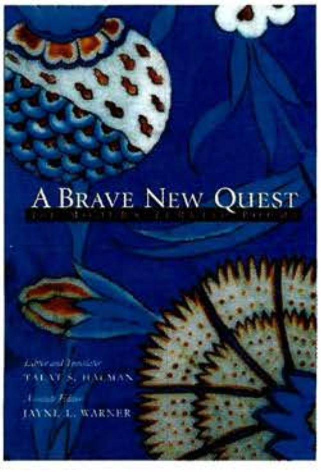
Brave new poetry

BY MAUREEN FREELY

A BRAVE NEW QUEST:
100 Modern Turkish Poems
Edited and translated by
Talat S Halman
Associate editor: Jayne L Warner
Syracuse University Press,
US$19.95

As Turkey's novelists gain wider recognition in the West, its poets are beginning to worry. For centuries theirs has been the pre-eminent art. But, because they are difficult to translate, they do not get the recognition they deserve abroad.

Talat Halman's new collection aims to correct that oversight. It is not so much an anthology as a sampling: a hundred poems by forty-four poets born between 1901 and 1958. Though he assures us that "no major poet who gained stature since the 1920s has been omitted", there are quite a few strange holes in the tapestry. The closer we get to the present, the larger and more numerous they become. For though he claims that "decades of soul-searching" and "a feverish search for fresh modes of expression" have now resulted in a "brave new synthesis", he sees no need to include any poet under the age of 48.



Perhaps his mind is on the larger picture. This is always a difficult thing to convey to the neophyte reader, but he does so in less than three pages, and with his usual grace, describing the twin traditions of the Ottoman age – divan and folk poetry – in one paragraph, and the restless inventiveness of twentieth-century poets in two. There is no time to put any of them in context, or to convey the sharp curves through which poetry travelled as the bold modernism of Nazım Hikmet gave way to the Garip School of Orhan Veli Kanık, Oktay Rifat and Melih Cevdet Anday, only to reassert itself as a major influence on Edip Cansever, Cemal Süreyya, Ece Ayhan, and several other Second Wave poets included here.

The poems are left to speak for themselves. Because the poets' names come at the end of each poem, and because all poems have the same translator, there is a curious, though rather pleasant, consistency of mood. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar the romantic nationalist flows into Nazım Hikmet the romantic communist. Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca the seer flows into Orhan Veli Kanık the urbane minimalist. Though the shadow of politics is sometimes evident, it is never allowed to dominate. This, too, is deliberate. Halman wants the music to send us into a reverie, and when he chooses his poets and poems well, it does. But it is difficult to appreciate their breadth or originality in isolation. I hope that Halman's next collection gives us the wherewithal to appreciate them more deeply.

Mystical mouthfuls

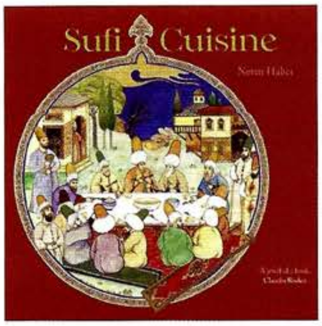
BY CHARLES PERRY

SUFI CUISINE
By Nevin Halıcı
Saqi Books, £14.95 ($24.95)

Has any mystic ever mentioned food as often, or in such detail, as Mevlâna? "I am your spinach, cook me as you desire, sour or sweet..." "O saffron, drink water until you become saffron, and only then enter the *zerde*..." "I've eaten neither *kavurma* nor *tirit* nor lentils..." Bushaq of Shiraz, perhaps, but he merely parodied famous verses by other poets, substituting food for the usual Sufi wine imagery. To Mevlâna, food was the spontaneous language of ecstasy.

As Nevin Halıcı describes in this book, the Mevlevi dervish order he founded in Konya is shot through with food. In the era before the dervish *tarikats* were closed, the kitchen was the heart of a Mevlevi lodge. The chief spiritual adviser was the Asçı Dede, or Cook Father, who also oversaw the mundane workings of the kitchen.

Ateş-Baz-ı Veli, Mevlâna's cook, is a revered figure among Mevlevis – his tomb in a suburb of Konya is a place of pilgrimage. (Halıcı points out that it is probably the oldest tomb of a cook anywhere in the world.) Legend credits him with the opening posture of the Mevlevi devotional dance. Ateş-Baz had complained that he hadn't enough wood for cooking, so Mevlâna told him to put his feet under the stove in place of the wood, and his toes obligingly emitted fire. But because he had doubted, his left big toe was burned, and he covered it in shame. This is said to be the reason that the Mevlevis begin their *sema* with the toes of the right foot over those of the left.



Nevin Hanım is the obvious person to write about Mevlevi food. She belongs to a prominent Mevlevi family in Konya, and a food-oriented one; one of the sources she cites is a paper on Mevlevi kitchen etiquette by Celaleddin Çelebi, one of Mevlâna's last descendants, which was presented at a 1986 food symposium organised by Nevin's brother. She herself is the author of important studies on Turkish regional cuisines.

The present book is a unique combination of scholarship and what you'd have to call devotional gastronomy. Halıcı has studied the early histories and memoirs of the Mevlevis and read through all of Mevlâna's thousands of ecstatic verses for the food references in them. Some of his verses, as she points out, are virtual recipes. Her recipe for fried carp is based on the famous couplet: "I am like a fish in the market, in the bazaar, in the pan, flipping from one side to the other, turning over and over – I burn and blaze."

She interprets all the dishes mentioned in her sources in the light of present-day Konya cooking practice, and it is reasonable to assume a culinary continuity in Konya, given the way everything revolves around Mevlâna there. On the basis of all this, she reconstructs a unique religious cuisine, one based on neither holiday foods nor food prohibitions, but on one mystic's works and practices. She considers it one of the roots of modern Turkish cuisine.

I have tried a number of recipes from this book and I can say that it does represent a fascinating cuisine which has

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one foot in the Perso-Arab medieval tradition, with its *erişte* noodles, candied rose petals and *sirkencübin* (honeyed vinegar). Many dishes are flavoured in with fruits, in the Persian and medieval Arab manner, which is relatively uncommon in Turkey today. Halıcı substitutes tomato juice and convincingly suggests that it has replaced the medieval sour fruit juices. Europeans and Americans often wonder why so many Turkish tomato sauces are rather thin; well, they are not failed versions of Italian *marinara* sauce, they are descended from sauces based on, say, pomegranate juice or sour grape juice.

Mevlevi cuisine also includes Central Asian contributions such as *börek*, *tutmaç* noodles and the humble flour soup *bulamaç aşı*. One exceptionally interesting and delicious dish is Belh-Özbek pilav, which comes from Balkh, Mevlâna's ancestral home in northern Afghanistan. It is made with meat, chickpeas and carrots and resembles what Turks today call *Buhara pilavı*, except that this version is enriched with pine nuts and chestnuts. It also contains currants, which probably stand in for the barberries used in Central Asia.

She gives a recipe for baklava using a Konya-style dough, which contains water filtered through wood ashes to give it a unique texture, both soft and crisp. I suspect that in Mevlâna's time it was probably made with something like sheets of noodle paste, rather than the paper-thin dough used in modern baklava, but this is the Konya recipe, and continuity is all.

In the middle ages, sugar was more expensive than it is today, so honey or *pekmez* (grape syrup) usually stood in its place, and this gives a distinctive countenance to many sweet dishes. *Pekmez*, in particular, would give a baklava a rather different effect than today's sugar syrup cut with lemon juice.

One of my favourite recipes in this book is carrots stewed with rice, butter and *pekmez*. They are utterly delicious, as well as having an impressive coppery colour.

Occasionally there are trivial flaws in recipes, the sort of thing that should have been sorted out in the editing process. For instance, the sweet spinach recipe asks you to reserve 200ml of cooking liquid but then forgets to include it. However, any cook can see where it should be added – just before the last stage of cooking. On the whole, these are very workable recipes, and this is an important, beautifully produced book.

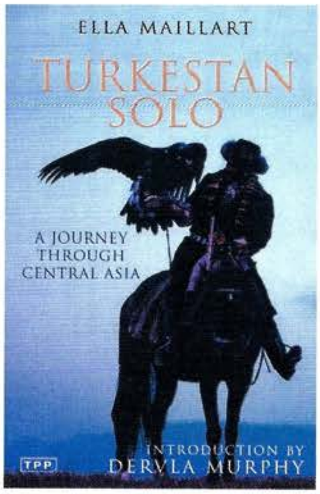
A singular adventure

BY CHRISTIAN TYLER

TURKESTAN SOLO: A journey through Central Asia
By Ella Maillart
Translated by John Rodker.
First published in English by Unwin Brothers, 1934.
New edition by Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2005, introduced by Dervla Murphy, £10.99

Ella ("Kini") Maillart is best known to English readers as the woman who accompanied Peter Fleming overland from Beijing to India via Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan in the 1930s. It had been with reluctance that they teamed up for this adventure, which produced a book apiece, since both made a fetish out of travelling alone (native guides did not count). Fleming's previous book had been called *One's Company*; Maillart's had been *Turkestan Solo*, the story of her travels through Russian Turkestan.

In fact, Maillart had the company of four Muscovite friends for the first part of that trip. Her book, written in the early 1930s and now re-issued, reminds us just how much the world has changed. Western nostalgia for the primitive life, reverence for the "noble savage", is hardly new. But in the age of cheap air fares, of the backpacking droves and the upmarket package tour, that nostalgia is not easily requited.



True nomadism is extinct and the wilderness has largely been tamed. The nomad yurts in which Maillart slept are now the tourist B-and-Bs of Central Asia. Expeditions are little more than organised Land Cruiser tours. As Dervla Murphy (herself a doughty soloist) says in her introduction to Maillart's book, adventure has become just another commodity. Hardships are routinely exaggerated and travel writers have become the heroes of their own stories.

As one who endures heat, cold and hunger only when absolutely unavoidable, I find the persistent fascination with primitive living hard to explain. (As for mountaineering, it is obviously a form of madness.) What is this escapism about? Is it a need to prove, or to "find", oneself? To impress others? Is it hatred of the modern world? Or is it a romantic fantasy about other people's lives?

Maillart says that life is made real by simplifying it, in the company of simple peoples. "With all the weight of the heavens over my sleeping body I shall learn what a roof is," she writes. She confesses to being tormented by the need to prove herself, and in a tight spot admits to trembling with fear like the rest of us. Generally she is hard-nosed. She records the prevalence of syphilis in the yurts, she bites her fleas in half, and she is too busy keeping warm, getting food and sleep, to worry about having mystical revelations in the desert. Maillart becomes "a recording drum… turned completely outwards while every faculty, keenly stimulated, will be concentrated on capturing all that surrounds me."

And capture it she does, in a journey which takes her from the glaciers of the Tian Shan mountains, where she ascends a 16,000-foot peak on skis and watches a Kirghiz granny sweeping out her yurt with an eagle's wing, to lodgings in the courtyard of a former medrese in Samarkand, from whose window she watches as a death sentence is passed on a group of anti-Soviet Uzbek rebels.

Travelling alone, her descriptions become ever keener: the filth of old Bukhara and the hunger of the people; the cheerful chaos of the market where she sells her hair-clippers for 20 roubles; the sound of Kazakh women pounding flour in the wagons on the train to the Amu Darya (Oxus) river.

Her journey reaches a climax of difficulty and confusion as she takes a boat downriver, visits Khiva, has her mountain boots stolen and loses her wallet. Finally, in a desperate race against the onset of winter, she manages to hire camels and guides for a 300-mile ride north along the snowbound margins of the Kızıl Kum Desert by the Aral Sea, back to despised civilisation.

Even in today's homogenised world, one can still find true adventure in travel – by learning the language, talking to people on the way, following one's own path, being prepared for difficulty, illness and danger – above all, by travelling alone. ◆

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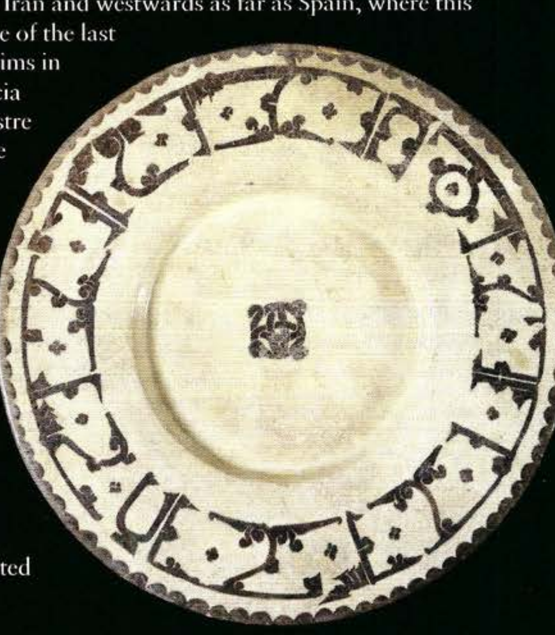
NEW LIGHT ON OLD GLORIES AT THE V&A

For three years, the main Islamic Middle East gallery at London's Victoria and Albert Museum has been closed. Now it has reopened – and the effect is spectacular. Here we present some key aspects of a stunning permanent collection that can now be seen, literally, in an entirely new light. Commentary by its curator, Tim Stanley.

Gallery photographs by Fritz von der Schulenburg

A Lustrous Age

Glazed ceramic tableware of the quality seen here was unknown in the Middle East before the rise of Islam. The arrival of fine high-fired ceramics from China changed all that. The Chinese ware imported by the direct sea route established between Basra and the ports of southern China in the eighth century, and the Abbasid court in Baghdad began to use them at table beside their gold and silver dishes. Other people wanted them, too, and those who could not afford the imports were supplied with local imitations. The Islamic tradition in ceramics was born, producing a great many different types. **Left:** this large earthenware bowl has an opaque white tin glaze and is decorated in metallic lustre with an image of a sailing ship. The lustre technique was invented in Iraq in the ninth century AD, and over the following centuries spread to Iran and westwards as far as Spain, where this large bowl was made. It is one of the last great ceramics made by Muslims in Spain. Later Christian Valencia became the main centre of lustre production. The sail bears the arms of Portugal, indicating that the bowl may have been made for export. **Right:** this slip-decorated dish has a decorative inscription in dark brown on a white background, an imitation of silverware with niello decoration. The inscription contains a saying in Arabic, "Knowledge is the most noble of ranks, and manly conduct is the most complicated of family trees".



Left: ship bowl, lustre ware from Malaga, Spain, 1425–50. Right: slip-decorated dish with Arabic inscription from eastern Iran or Central Asia, 10th century AD

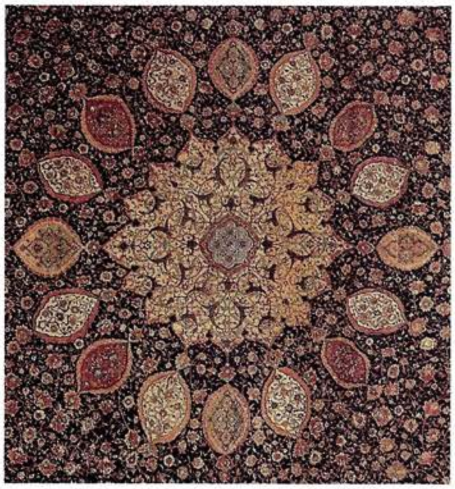
The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has one of the world's great collections of Islamic art from the Middle East, and it is more than half a century since the pick of this collection was first displayed in a large hall near the main entrance. This space, now renamed the Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art, has been transformed into one of the museum's most spectacular displays.

The Jameel Gallery was made possible by a generous donation from Mohammed Jameel and his family, Saudi citizens with a lively interest in the arts.

The key to the success of the new gallery has been the decision to lay the huge, beautiful and historically important Ardabil carpet on the floor in the centre of the hall and to design the rest of the once-gloomy room around it. The carpet is protected by a canopy suspended just above head-height and at floor level by non-reflecting glass walls. It is therefore fully visible to visitors – particularly when the lights are on. To prevent fading, the lights are activated for only ten minutes on the hour and half-hour, providing a unusual touch of drama to a gallery visit.

Entering the exhibition from the south, visitors will find the display organised by general themes, such as religious art or the transition from antiquity. The objects in this section were mainly made before 1500, and the themes form an introduction to Islamic art. The northern end of the gallery is divided into two regional displays: one shows textiles and ceramics made in Turkey in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the other a range of materials made for the Ottomans' contemporaries in Iran, the Safavid dynasty.

When looking for the Turkish contribution to the splendour of the new gallery, it is easy to home in on the Ottoman displays. But Turks are everywhere. Even the Safavids, the Ottomans' great Eastern rivals, were Turkish-speaking Turkomans originally from Azerbaijan. The Turcophile visitor to the V&A should therefore look on the display as a demonstration of the heights reached by Turkish patronage of the arts in the Islamic Middle East.


V&A IMAGES/VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

The V&A is open daily 10am–5.45pm (or 10pm on Wednesday and the last Friday of the month). Details: www.vam.ac.uk

Books: *Palace and Mosque: Islamic Art from the Middle East*, by Tim Stanley, offers an introduction to Islamic art that draws on examples from the V&A. It is available post-free to subscribers, price £30, from www.cornucopia.net. Also recommended: *The Making of the Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum*, edited by Rosemary Crill and Tim Stanley, £35

THE ARDABIL CARPET

At the centre of the V&A's Jameel Gallery lies the Ardabil carpet, one of the finest Islamic carpets in existence – and at 10.5m by 5m, one of the largest. It was bought for the V&A in 1893 on the advice of William Morris.

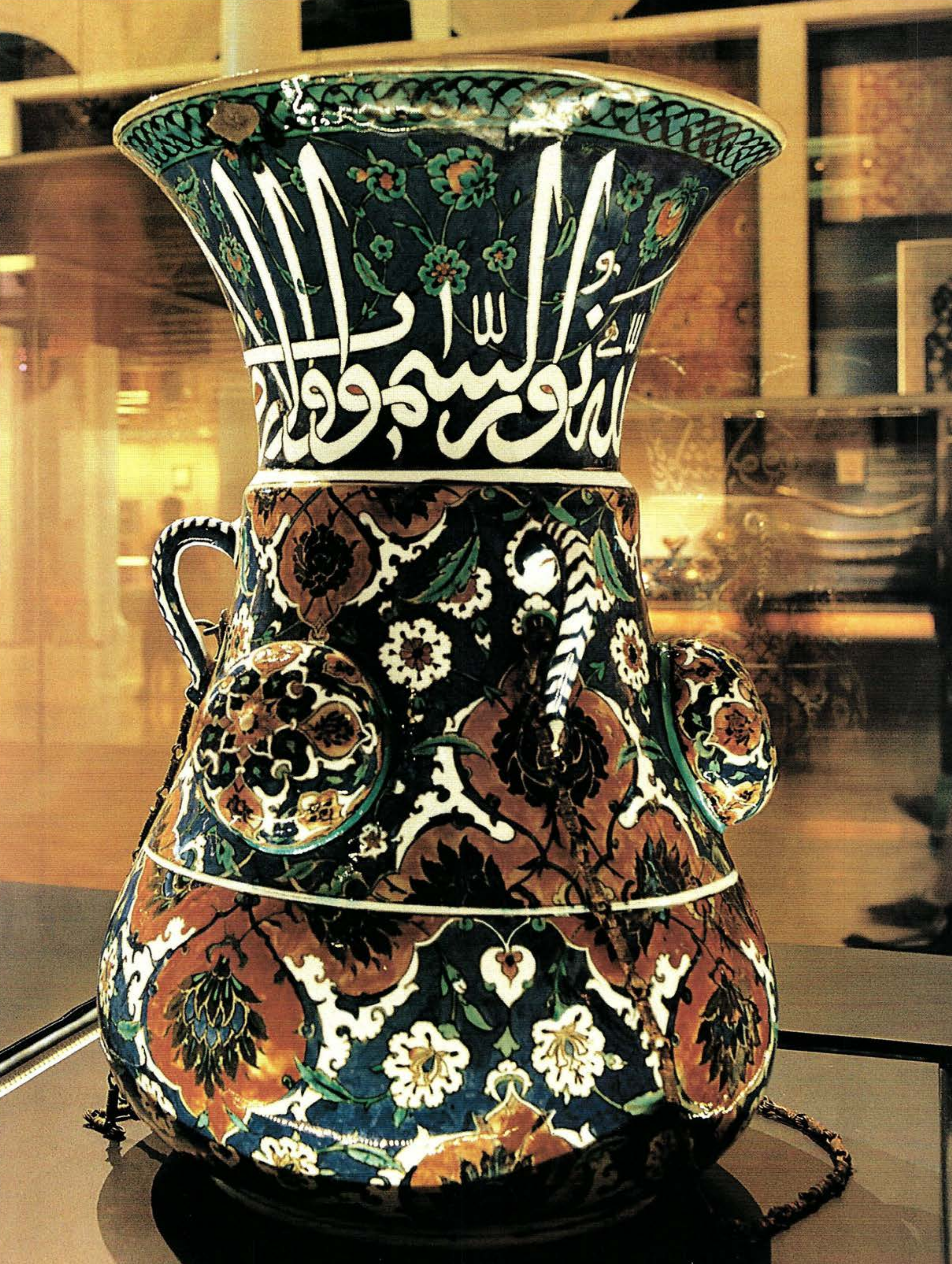
Morris considered the carpet's design to be "of singular perfection". A single integrated design fills the whole vast surface, while the double pattern of floral scrolls that forms the background runs uninterrupted for some nine metres.

The carpet is also of great historical importance. It was commissioned as one of a pair by the ruler of Iran, Shah Tahmasp, for the shrine of his ancestor, Shaykh Safi al-Din, in the town of Ardabil in northwest Iran. In a small panel at one end, the date of completion is given as the year 946 in the Muslim calendar (1539–40AD). The text states that the man in charge of its production was Maqsud Kashani.

The Ardabil carpet is one of the great treasures of the V&A. It has now been given a setting worthy of its status.

FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG

FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG

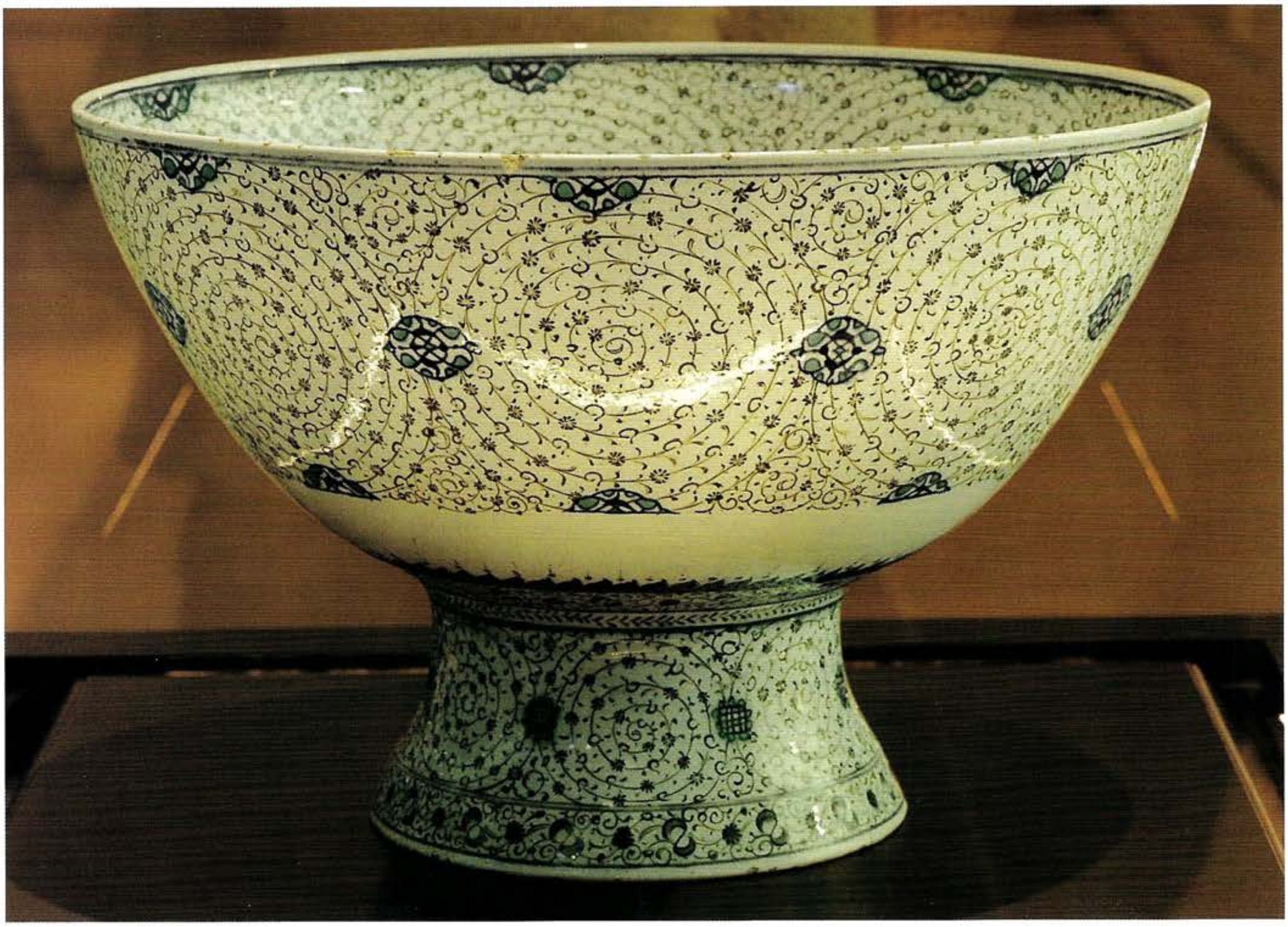

الله نور السموات والا

THE IZNIK TREASURES

The luxury ceramics of Ottoman Turkey have a good claim to being the best ever produced in the Middle East. Most were made in Iznik, which has given these wares its name. Iznik production has been traced from the 1470s to the late 17th century.

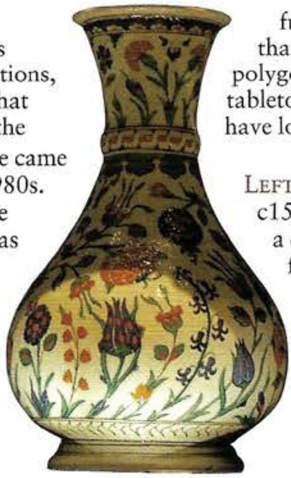
PREVIOUS PAGES: one of the most striking developments was the introduction of red, a very hard colour to achieve in underglaze decoration. It is first seen in items made for the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, completed in 1557. In the V&A's imposing "mosque lamp" (in fact a lamp-shaped ornament from the Süleymaniye), the red has an orange tone and is unevenly applied – an experimental piece. Later, a bright tomato-red was produced consistently, as the tile panel on page 30 (c1580) shows.

BELOW: the V&A's collection illustrates the wide range of uses to which Iznik wares were put. This huge footed basin may have been used for guests to wash their hands. No fewer than five of these ceramic masterpieces are on show in the gallery. The equally impressive ewers that must have been used with them have not survived.



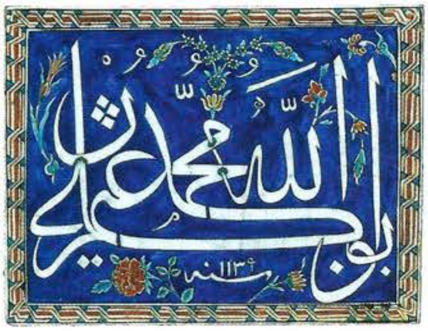
FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG

OPPOSITE: large polygonal Iznik tiles exist in many collections, but no one knew what they were for until the V&A's tile-top table came up for sale in the 1980s. At first many people dismissed the table as a 19th-century creation to accommodate the tile. But the truth is that it is an authentic piece of Ottoman court furniture, and that other polygonal tiles are tabletops that must have lost their tables.

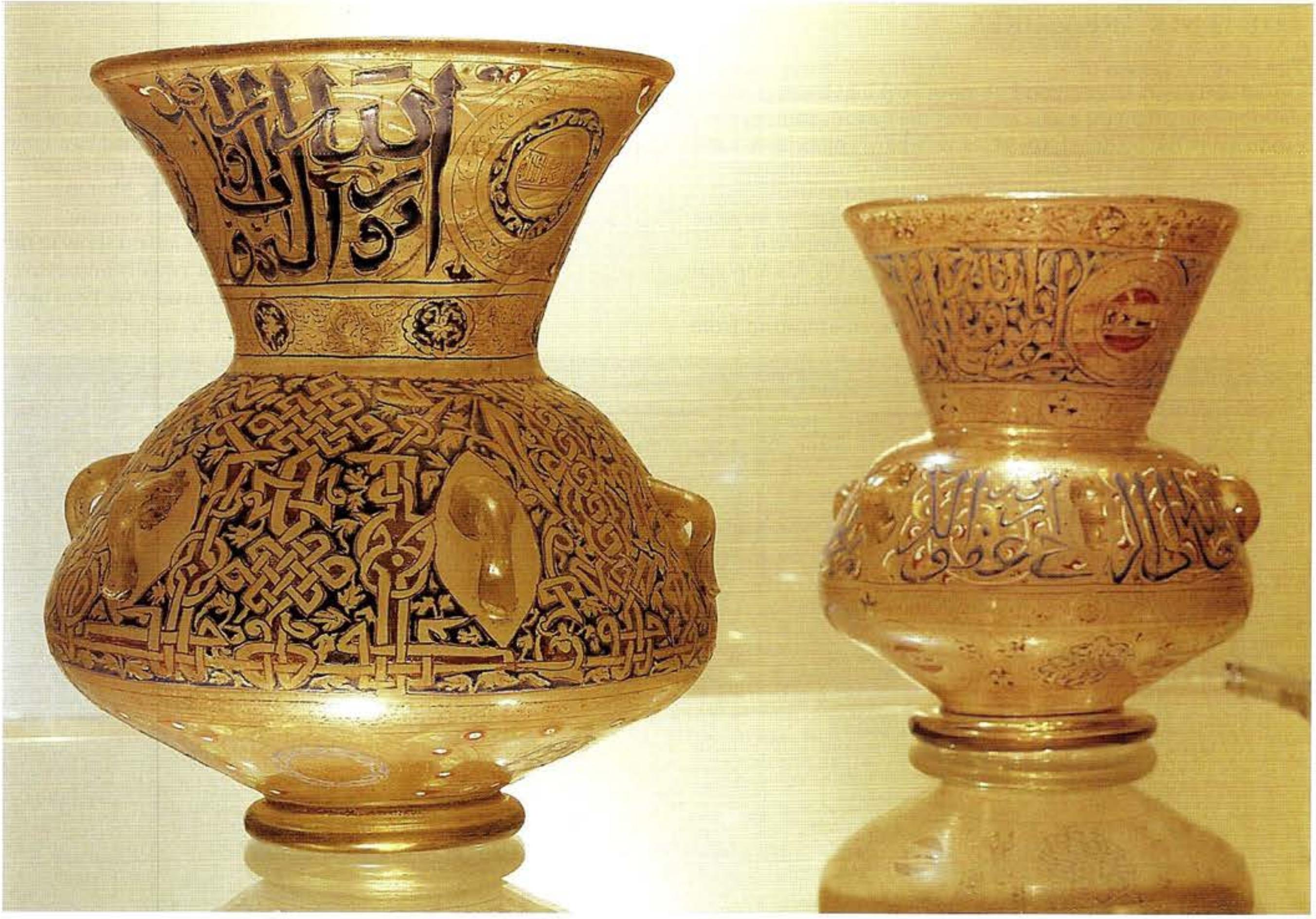


LEFT: this vase, c1575, was clearly a container for flowers, and flowers form its decoration, painted in brilliant colour against a pure white ground. They sway in the spring breeze, allowing the painter to match them to the swelling shape of the vessel.

RIGHT: this calligraphic tile takes us beyond the history of the Iznik kilns, for it was made at Tekfursarayı in Istanbul, where Ahmet III moved the potters in the early 18th century. The tile has a message: the design is formed from the names of God, the Prophet and the first four caliphs of Islam.

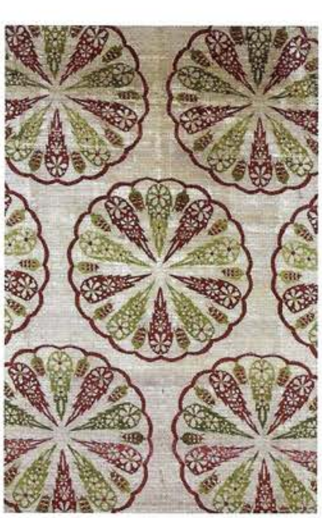


V&A IMAGES/VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM



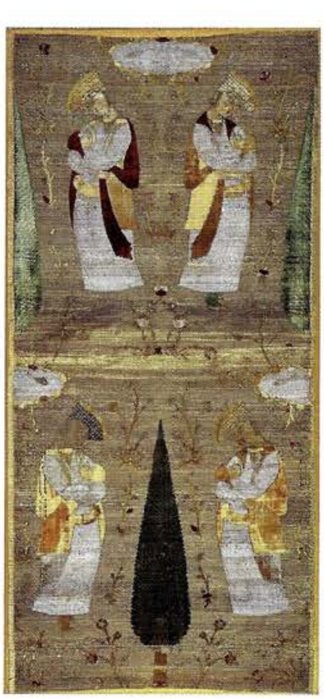
DYNASTIES

ABOVE: enamelled and gilded glass was produced for more than half a century after the Mamluk sultans took power in Egypt and Syria in 1250. Secular examples are rare, but many of the lamps made for religious buildings were preserved *in situ* until the 19th century, when they began to enter museum collections. Like the two shown above, they generally have large inscriptions in Arabic, elegantly calligraphed in blue or white enamel. Such large inscriptions are a distinctive element of Mamluk style.



ABOVE RIGHT AND OPPOSITE: when an equally distinctive Ottoman style developed in the 16th century, inscriptions played a relatively minor role. Instead, plant-based ornament came to be dominant. An innovation of around 1540 was the introduction of recognisable flowers, especially carnations, tulips and roses. On the V&A's large 17th-century tile panel opposite, huge arrangements emerge from vases. A less naturalistic treatment is seen on the cloth of silver, left, made in the later 16th century. Here the great roundels are filled with rosebuds, and cypresses with superimposed rosettes.

RIGHT: art of the Safavid dynasty in Iran (1501–1722) shares many of the same sources as Ottoman art, but it developed along different lines, most notably in the use of human and animal figures. Almost completely absent from the Ottoman decorative tradition, they are abundant in Safavid tilework and silks. Large figures of courtiers decorate this velvet hanging, which dates from the late 16th or early 17th-century. The difference in dynastic styles reflects the military and ideological conflict between the two states.



CRIMEA

A brief history of an unnecessary war. By Norman Stone

RUSSES EN TURQUIE
CANTINE DE LA BONNE FOI
L'UNION FAIT LA FORCE
N:1

This plate commemorating Turkey's 19th-century attempts to keep the Russians at bay forms part of a new exhibition in Istanbul of Crimean War memorabilia

THE ÖMER K KOÇ COLLECTION

The Crimean War of 1853–56, which ended 150 years ago this year, now seems very remote. Why were Great Britain and France, in alliance with Ottoman Turkey, fighting Russia in the Black Sea? The cause now seems incomprehensible: it rested on the question as to whether French Catholics or Russian Orthodox had first claim to the keys of the Holy Places in Jerusalem.

This was a deeply religious age, and of course it rated this matter very highly, but behind it was a larger question of imperialism: whether the Russians or the French, officially protecting their Christians, would dominate the Ottoman Empire. The British were certainly fighting about this. Their statesmen invoked the Balance of Power, and said that weak Turkey needed weight to match that of predatory Russia. Otherwise, the Tsar might seize the Straits at Constantinople, or even destroy Turkey altogether. Then Russian ships would sail into the Mediterranean and cut British communications with India.

This fear was unreal – Russia was too backward, and had neither railways to shift troops nor modern warships to challenge Western ones. The outbreak of war was also surreal, and based on misunderstanding. The telegraph from London functioned only as far as the Austrian borders, and decisive action had to be taken by a man on the spot who was not able to consult London. A Russian diplomat also blundered. Fleets and soldiers manoeuvred, tempers flared, there were skirmishes, and the Russians attacked Turkish ships in Sinop.

Even finding a place to fight the war was not easy: how do you attack Russia from Western Europe? The Crimean Peninsula, and the naval base of Sebastopol, were at least within amphibious striking range of the Straits, and in the next two years the Allies were bogged down in a protracted siege of the fortress of Sebastopol, which eventually fell.

For almost the whole course of the war, the Powers had been talking peace in Vienna, under Austrian auspices, and peace was quite easy to conclude, with a few Russian concessions. Not much of a war, in other words. And yet it was the decisive one of the century.

Its causes did not really matter much. They just reflected the fact that Russia had become very, very unpopular in the West, or at any rate with enlightened public opinion, which, given the functioning of the telegraph, was just then in immediate receipt of news from abroad that might shock it – whether the news was of Russian misdeeds or the medical inefficiency of the British Army as revealed by Florence Nightingale.

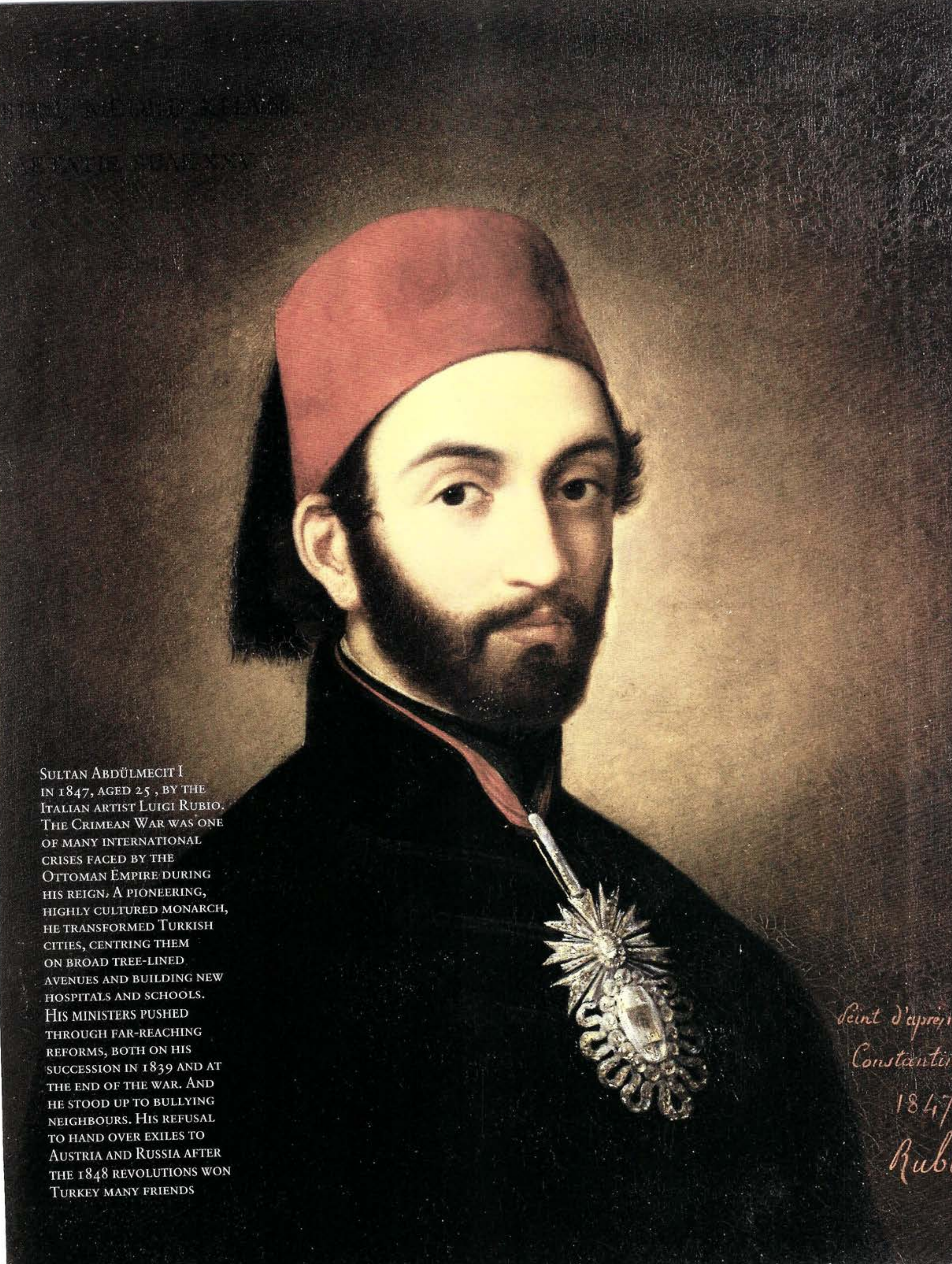
The outcome of the Crimean War was also momentous, in a way that could hardly be guessed from its causes and course. It led straight to the unification, first of Italy, then of Germany. A generation later and these two were producing Mussolini and Hitler.

The chief loser was a state that did not even fight, the Austrian or Habsburg empire. In 1853 it dominated Central Europe, and especially Germany and Italy, preventing any national unification. After Napoleon had been defeated in 1814, the crowned heads and statesmen who met at the Congress of Vienna were determined to avoid any further wars and revolutionary upheavals. Clever conservatives came to the fore, headed by Clemens Metternich, the chief statesman on the Austrian side. He knew that if Italian and German nationalism went ahead, then all landmarks would go down. Austria offered itself as a problem-solver, a sort of grand, double-eagled deep-freeze.

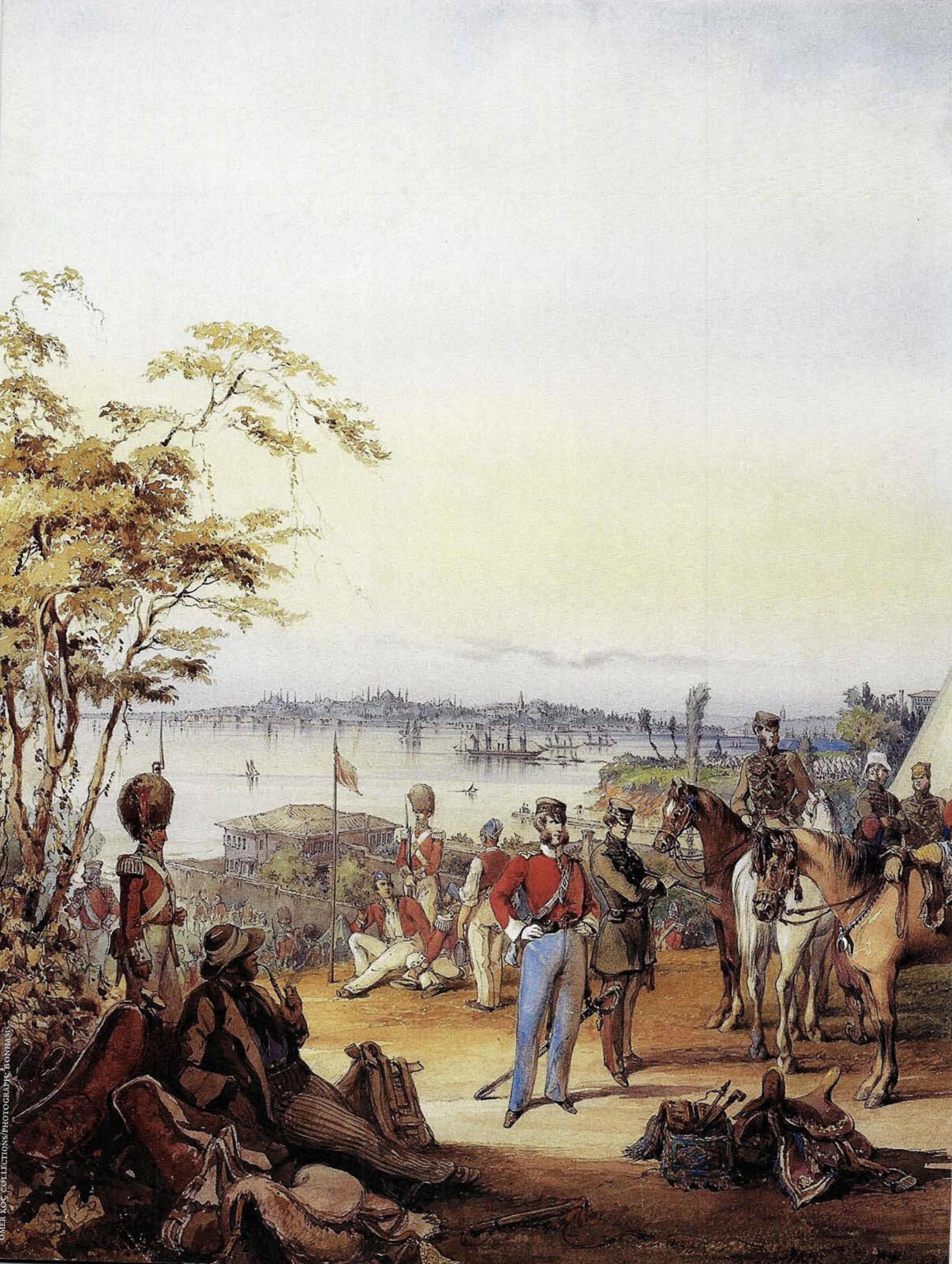
The Emperor ran Germany as a very loose confederation. Prussia, the other Great Power, was tied down by various constitutional devices, and mixed in with other kingdoms, city-states, grand duchies and principalities minor and miniature.

Italy was similarly controlled. There was direct Austrian control of Lombardy and Venetia, and indirect control

THE ÖMER K KOÇ COLLECTION



SULTAN ABDÜLMECIT I IN 1847, AGED 25, BY THE ITALIAN ARTIST LUIGI RUBIO. THE CRIMEAN WAR WAS ONE OF MANY INTERNATIONAL CRISES FACED BY THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE DURING HIS REIGN. A PIONEERING, HIGHLY CULTURED MONARCH, HE TRANSFORMED TURKISH CITIES, CENTRING THEM ON BROAD TREE-LINED AVENUES AND BUILDING NEW HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS. HIS MINISTERS PUSHED THROUGH FAR-REACHING REFORMS, BOTH ON HIS SUCCESSION IN 1839 AND AT THE END OF THE WAR. AND HE STOOD UP TO BULLYING NEIGHBOURS. HIS REFUSAL TO HAND OVER EXILES TO AUSTRIA AND RUSSIA AFTER THE 1848 REVOLUTIONS WON TURKEY MANY FRIENDS



ÖMER KOÇ COLLECTIONS/PHOTOGRAPH: BONHAMS

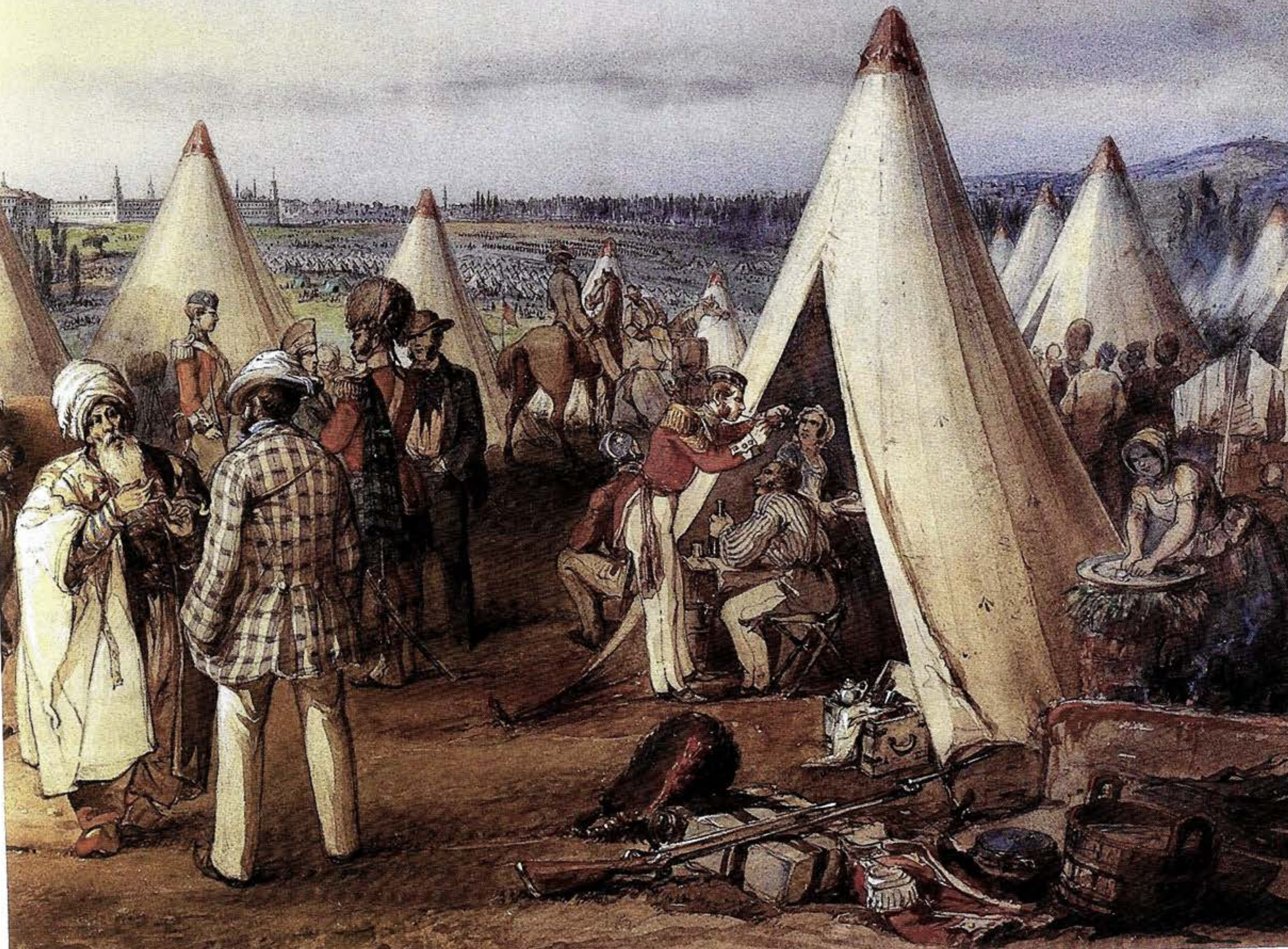
CALM BEFORE THE STORM

On a hilltop in Scutari at the start of the Crimean War, British soldiers exude complete confidence. Proud officers of Guards and Highland regiments, they can have little idea of the horrors to come. Dated May 11, 1854, this watercolour by Amadeo, Count Preziosi, which belonged to Stratford Canning, the British ambassador of the day, is highly symbolic and full of telling detail. Called simply *Scutari* (present-day Üsküdar), it was recently bought at Bonhams for the Ömer Koç collection, which will make it the centrepiece of its Crimean War exhibition opening in Istanbul in December.

In the distance, troops parade in front of the Selimiye Barracks, soon to become the hospital where Florence Nightingale ministered to the sick and dying. Further troops are disembarking from the steamship Victoria in the Bosphorus. On the shoreline behind the flagpole is the mansion occupied by Lord Raglan, commander of the British force. On the far shore of the Bosphorus are the minarets of the old city of Istanbul.

The two civilians negotiating in the foreground represent the meeting of East and West – the figure in the checked jacket, with the riding crop, may even be the artist himself. On the left, Turkish pack saddles and swords contrast with the Western accoutrements of war on the right: bearskin, rifle, blue cap and tunic with epaulettes.

This picturesque record would soon be overtaken by the gruesome truth. The Crimean was the first public war: its realities would be grittily captured in photographs, and the first-hand accounts of a host of war correspondents would be instantly relayed by the newly invented telegraph.



of other places. *"Modène étranglée râle sous son archiduc,"* wrote Victor Hugo in ridiculous mode, and Stendhal was not kindly either about the pink-taffeta silly-intrigue world of his *Chartreuse de Parme*, both Modena and Parma being ruled by a Habsburg. The Vatican ran the Papal States, and reactionary Bourbons operated Naples and Sicily.

Inside the Austrian empire were other once-great nations, especially the Hungarians and Poles, and they were kept down as well, or at any rate confined in creaking frameworks of feudal machinery. If nationalists complained, they were put into the Moravian fortress of Spielberg, the Austrian Bastille, and Metternich refused even to use the word "nation": instead, he referred to "historico-political individualities". He and other conservatives knew perfectly well that if these "individualities" were allowed expression, the Austrian empire would dissolve into warring fragments and the peace of Europe would be destroyed. He therefore ran the empire with as little change as possible.

The glue for his creaking framework, which he himself called a "worm-eaten structure", was supplied by a reactionary Catholicism, reviving old practices such as the king's touching people for scrofula after a coronation. But so long as harvests were decent, and tame peasants followed their priests, Metternich would go on.

Austria had stabilisation from outside because of another great element: the Russian army. Russia emerged from the Napoleonic wars as the great continental victor: the French army had drowned in the snows in 1812, and by 1814 the Cossacks were in Paris. Russia took most of Poland, and Tsar Nicholas I adopted a policy of out-and-out reaction. At home there was serfdom, censorship, a secret police, a vast army, and the Orthodox church to keep the people quiet. Nicholas I did not want troubles in Europe, in case they caused revolt in Russia.

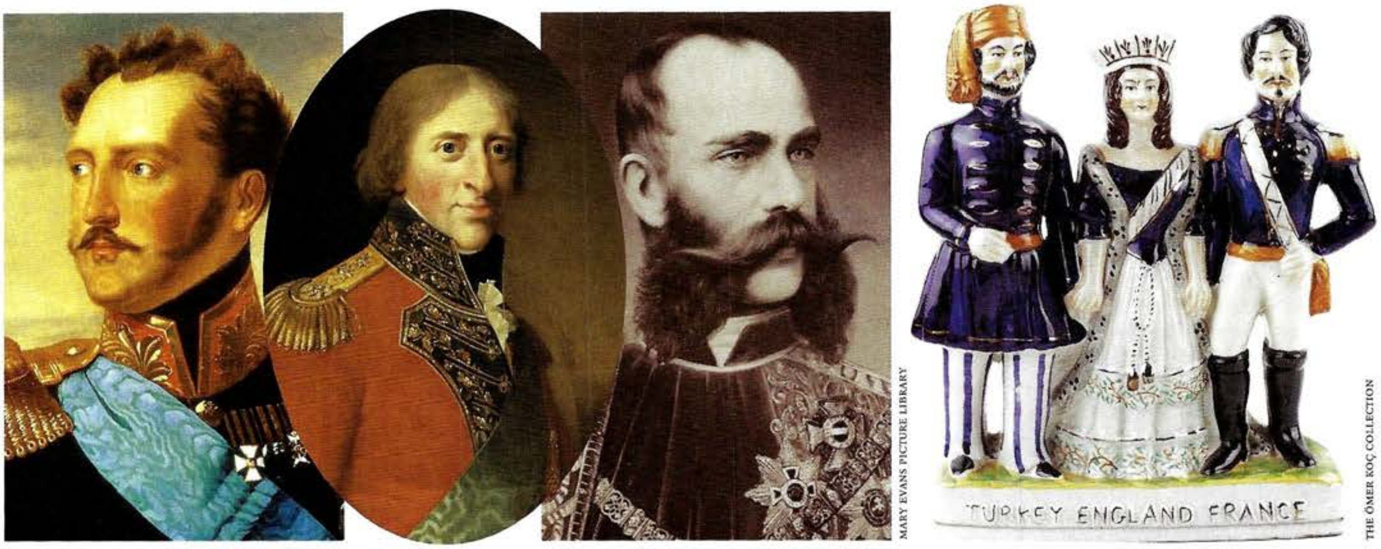
In the 1820s, when Greek nationalists had revolted against Turkey, he had backed them for a time, and even gone to war on their behalf. But once Greece was set up, the example was followed in Poland, where there was a fierce rebellion. After that, Nicholas I realised that Metternich was right: the safety of autocratic monarchy in Prussia, Russia and Austria (what the British curiously called "the three Northern Courts") meant constant collaboration, and vigilance against "the Revolution". Implicitly, the Tsar underwrote Austrian domination of Central Europe. In 1848 the insurance was called in.

It was called "the springtime of peoples". It was an abnormal spring: the buds were on the trees in February, which caused epidemics (often a background to revolutions) and there had been harvest failures and price rises. Revolutionaries took to the streets, and the old monarchs, who had been expecting something of the sort, gave way or fled. Nationalists in Germany, Hungary and Italy proclaimed that their time had come; so did liberals, and so, even, did some radical democrats. But it all fell apart quite quickly.

The old armies were still intact, and the priests had some ammunition, because the peasants – *ruraux brutaux,* as French radicals sneered, or "potatoes", as Marx called them – disliked and mistrusted wordy liberals, and had no interest in the supposed national cause. A Prince Windischgrätz restored order in Prague in June, and the Austrian army moved to defend the empire in northern Italy and Hungary.

Austria's future was at stake, and the outcome would depend on armies and power politics. Would the French support the would-be unifiers of Italy, as the great Napoleon had once done? Would the Prussian army come to the rescue of the nationalist professors waffling away against the Habsburgs in Frankfurt? Would the radical Hungarian Louis Kossuth succeed in creating a Hungarian republic with boundaries on the Adriatic and the Black Sea?

For a time, the Austrians were under severe pressure. They could, just about, contain the Italians (the Radetzky March goes back to this period), but Hungary was very difficult, and there was also an explicit rivalry, in Germany, with Prussia. Austria was of course infinitely grander, the Habsburg dynasty going back almost a thousand years, whereas the Prussian Hohenzollerns were relative upstarts, and their territory had originally just been a large sandbox on the Baltic. But Prussia was organised, already partly industrialised, and Protestant; could she not lead the disunited German nation? Austrian rivalry with Prussia even produced its own little armed clash



Royals: Tsar Nicholas I; Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia; Austria's Franz Joseph; Abdülmecit, Queen Victoria and Napoleon III

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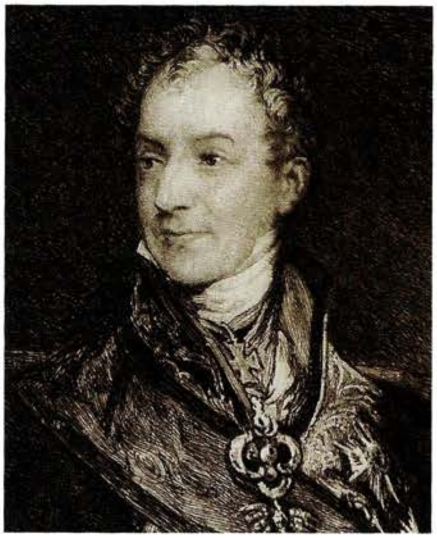
MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

THE ÖMER KOÇ COLLECTION

in Hesse, known as the Hornberger Schiessen, the Fort Sumter of the later wars for German unification.

It was here that Tsar Nicholas I intervened. He told the Prussians to drop it. St Petersburg and Berlin were very close: a senior officer from the one had a privileged place as general-adjutant at the court of the other, partly as a sign of alliance as regards Poland, partly as a matter of dynastic solidarity against "the Revolution" overall. (There is a well-known Russian Nikolaikirche on a lake to the west of Berlin; and there is a lesser-known Lutheran one, the Friedenskirche, on the edge of the park at Potsdam, where Kaiser Wilhelm II's English mother is buried and which has an Orthodox mosaic interior, obviously copied from Aya Sofya in Istanbul.) The king of Prussia was now told what to do. Austria was to be preserved. The Tsar did not want a Greater Germany, and the Prussian conservatives anyway disliked south German Catholics even more than they disliked radical liberal nationalists. At Russian prompting, Friedrich Wilhelm IV refused to accept a German crown offered by liberals. Somewhat later, in 1850, in the Moravian town of Olomouc (then Olmütz) there was an Austro–Prussian meeting at which the Tsar's ambassador, a Baron Meyendorff, presided. Austria once more took undisputed headship of the German confederation, and Meyendorff put up a triumphal plaque outside the house where this agreement ("the humiliation of Olmütz", as nationalist historians called it) was signed.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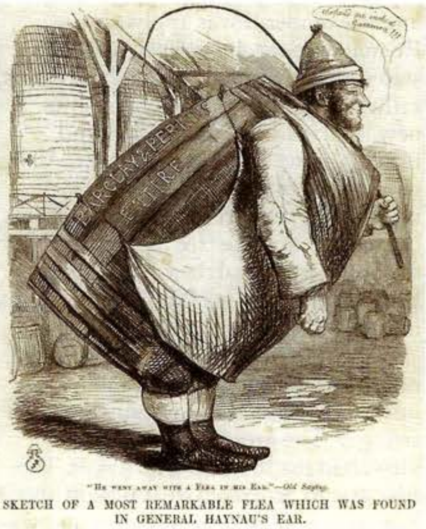
BARCLAY & PERKINS
ENTIRE
"He went away with a Flea in his Ear."—Old Saying.
SKETCH OF A MOST REMARKABLE FLEA WHICH WAS FOUND IN GENERAL HAYNAU'S EAR.
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TIME LIFE/GETTY IMAGES

FAMOUS FACES: PRINCE METTERNICH OF AUSTRIA; PUNCH ON THE LONDON BREWERS WHO ASSAULTED HAYNAU; MR AND MRS KARL MARX

But already, the year before, the Tsar had done still more for the new young Austrian emperor, Franz Joseph. The Austrians had had their hands full in crushing the Italians, and had not been able to deal adequately with the Hungarians. A Russian army intervened, and though the Hungarians (with a Polish general or two) fought quite well, they could not cope with Austria and Russia together. In August 1849, they surrendered. Thirteen of their leaders were hanged by the Austrians, and the rest took the road southeast, into Turkish territory.

There followed an episode that is part of the origins of the Crimean War. The Hungarian and Polish exiles were now in Istanbul, and there was a joint *démarche* by the Austrian and Russian ambassadors to have them extradited. The Sultan resisted. Turkey had quite a long tradition of looking after such people, and had even sheltered Charles XII of Sweden when he fled, after defeat by Peter the Great in 1709 (he made a great pest of himself). Austria and Russia threatened war over this. But liberal opinion in Western Europe was already in uproar over the behaviour of these two: the Austrian general Haynau, visiting a London brewery, was nearly lynched by the workmen because they were incensed at the repression he had exercised in Italy (he was known as "the Hyena of Brescia"), and French public opinion could as easily be marshalled in favour of Poland as British opinion was in favour of Italy. Austria was bad enough; but Russia in such circles was hated, as the epicentre of reaction.

London and Paris supported the sultan in this crisis, and his chivalry counted greatly in his favour. But the Turks were popular on other grounds. In 1838 they had accepted the central doctrine of Manchester liberalism, free trade, and the following year they had taken up other doctrines: the Tanzimat, or "beneficent re-orderings", which allowed full civil equality for all of the sultan's subjects, including the Christians who went on to make up roughly one half of the population of some great cities. This was a very bold and even unique step, and for a time "the Turk" had a good press in progressive quarters. Karl Marx made a spirited effort to learn Ottoman, realising that there was much of intellectual interest in the process.

The Russians, by contrast, could do no good at all, and when the Crimean War broke out, public opinion in Great Britain and France was enthusiastic. There would be revenge for 1848, and the pretext for war did not really matter.

The Tsar did not understand the degree to which he was hated in progressive Europe, and, using the religious excuse, tried to bully the Turks. But the French had their own interests in the Levant, at least since the first Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, and, through Catholic missions, they were establishing a protectorate over the Lebanon in particular.

In France the outcome of 1848 had not been a restoration of the old dynasty but a return of the Bonapartes, in the shape of the great man's nephew, who set up the "Second Empire", talked nationalist-imperialist language and relied, internally, on peasant votes managed by priests. Napoleon III even allowed the Church considerable control of education and sent troops to protect the Pope from Italian revolutionaries. The Sultan gave France special rights over the Holy Places. The Tsar protested, sending a mission under the blustering Prince Menshikov.

By now the British were supporting the French position, because they had had their own commercial interests in the expansion of railways and banks in the Levant since the Tanzimat, and anyway did not wish to see an expansionist Russia dominating Turkey. The Turks, trying to activate their new alliances, responded provocatively to Russian blusterings, and British public opinion did not really leave any choice in the matter. British and French warships steamed or sailed into the Dardanelles, and war began.

The Russians had counted on support from the other two "Northern Courts". But though the King of Prussia, Frederick William IV, was a lachrymose reactionary, he was not going to fight a war on the Rhine, let alone at sea, against the British and French, for Russia's sake. The Austrians no doubt did owe their survival to Nicholas I, but they were not minded to fight another war with France in Italy for the sake of Russian interests in the Levant, and in any case they had interests of their own.

Franz Joseph's chief minister, Prince Felix Schwarzenberg, exclaimed, "Austria's ingratitude will astonish the world", and he tried to establish Austrian hegemony in the Balkans, particularly in the lands that were soon to form independent Romania. A good part of Austrian trade either did or could pass through them, along the Danube delta, but they were theoretically Turkish territory, and the Russians were in occupation of them. Franz Joseph served an ultimatum on the Russians, as they were bogged down in the Crimea, and got them out. This act of ingratitude, or even treachery, broke Nicholas I's heart, and he died, perhaps by his own hand, in March 1856.

His successor, Alexander II, had learned some lessons from all of this. The first was that Russia badly needed root-and-branch reform – an end to the backwardness that infested everything Russian with the vitality of a weed. That would mean no foreign adventures, and especially no further endorsement of the treacherous Austrians. Peace was easily patched up, and Alexander even took up a French alliance, using it to hold the Austrians off in the Danubian lands. A new Romania did emerge, in 1859, but it was a French protectorate in all but name, and the Austrians got nowhere.

This was the end of the Congress of Vienna settlement of 1815, and the unification of Romania was only a prelude to much grander events. The 1860s were to be an extraordinary decade, marked by wars of national unification – Italy and Germany in Europe, the great Civil War in America. At the time, there was tremendous energy and optimism, a belief in unstoppable progress, and there was even a sort of formula for achieving it. The Turks had already applied some of it with the Tanzimat, so had the Japanese with the Meiji restoration, and Alexander II was applying a Russian variant. It involved nation-states, the abolition of feudalism, banks, railways, grand schools, universities, new legal institutions, science, and, usually, some kind of parliament. All in all, it was a foretaste of the 1990s, when, after the end of the Iron Curtain, democracy and the free market were supposed to spread their magic, this time American in inspiration and not, as in the 1860s, British.

Napoleon III was restless, superficial, opportunistic, anxious to establish his upstart dynasty. He had something of a strategy. The great Napoleon, in his view, had made two big mistakes. The first was to provoke Great Britain and Russia into alliance, and the second was to alienate the various European nationalists. Napoleon III planned to set up a French-dominated Europe of nations; and in attempting this, he wrecked France as a Great Power.

Marx, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, understood the cosmic importance of what was otherwise a grotesquely trivial regime of grasping property-dealers, attitudinising priests and silly soldier-men. An early exercise in the Bonapartist textbook involved campaigning in Italy. The Crimean War had isolated Austria, and in 1859 Napoleon III provoked a war with her – using half-French Piedmont, based on Genoa and Turin, as a supposed tool. The British, who had a strange belief in liberal Italy, cheered him on, and the Austrians were defeated, at Magenta and Solferino (after which the Paris property-dealers named one of their boulevards). The various Habsburg possessions and satellites,with the curious exception of San Marino, then collapsed into a new kingdom of Italy. But Napoleon III ran into problems.

In the first place he depended on clerical supporters, and they would not stand for the extinction of the Papal State: French troops had to be maintained to protect the Pope, and Florence rather than Rome became the new Italian capital. This did nothing for Franco-Italian relations. Realising too late the dangers he had conjured up, Napoleon III tried to cut his own satellite down to size, and would not let it have the Venetian lands, either: they remained under Austria.

Italy quickly made an agreement with Prussia: if she could challenge Austria for the leadership of a united Germany, the Austrians would have to fight on a second, southern front. The manager of Prussian affairs, Otto von Bismarck, was a far more solid and intelligent man than Napoleon III, and he carefully planned his moves in such a way as to provoke Austria into even greater clumsiness than usual. Without the French alliance that might have saved her, Austria was drawn into a six-week war, in 1866, with Prussia and Italy – a two-front war which, with her army divided, she could not win. Prussia now unified at least North Germany, and dominated the whole; and the Italians got the Venetian lands that Napoleon III had refused them. They were soon also, again through Bismarck, to get Rome itself.

There was another, somewhat hidden, victor of 1866. The Hungarians had been waiting for the opportunity: Kossuth spent his time in Turin, where he was to die, and there was even a small legion fighting for Prussia. Now, in 1867, Franz Joseph agreed to an enormous internal change. Greater Hungary came into constitutional existence, as an equal partner in the Habsburg empire,which was renamed "Austria-Hungary". Hungary was part of the Bismarckian system, and would never allow Austria to go against Prussia. Belatedly Napoleon III came to realise what he had done. Sick and disillusioned, hardly in charge of events any more, he responded to another Bismarckian provocation in 1870, and was pushed by the press into a warlike response. The Franco–Prussian War began: in six weeks, with the Battle of

Sedan, Napoleon III was Bismarck's prisoner, and the long French domination of Europe came to an end. In 1871, at Louis XIV's great palace of Versailles, the king of Prussia was acclaimed as German Emperor.

History did not then come to an end – far from it. The national creations of the 1860s did indeed boom for a time, and boomed again. But each turned out badly, and even showed that Metternich's forebodings had been right. Italy produced Mussolini, as well as the model of Fascism without which Germany could not have produced Hitler and National Socialism. Greater Hungary ended in tears, and the shrinking of the country to its present small size. In the 1860s not too many people foresaw disasters of this kind. Pope Pius IX probably did; and so, in his way, did Karl Marx. He had always written Russia off as backward. When the reforms of Alexander II went ahead, he began to understand that a great revolution might be brewing there (Dostoyevsky, in *The Possessed*, even made an uncanny prediction of its nature, fifty years before the Bolshevik seizure of power). He made a start on learning Russian, and in his bedroom assembled three cubic metres of statistics about the Russian economy. One morning in 1883 he woke up, clapped eyes on the boxes, and died.

The Crimean War was blundered into, by men who did not really understand what they were doing. They have much to answer for. ◆

The Ballad of Abdul Abulbul Amir

The sons of the prophet were hardy and bold,
And quite unaccustomed to fear,
But the bravest of these was a man, I am told
Named Abdul Abulbul Amir.

This son of the desert, in battle aroused,
Could spit twenty men on his spear.
A terrible creature, both sober and soused
Was Abdul Abulbul Amir.

When they needed a man to encourage the van,
Or to harass the foe from the rear,
Or to storm a redoubt, they had only to shout
For Abdul Abulbul Amir.

There are heroes aplenty and men known to fame
In the troops that were led by the Czar;
But the bravest of these was a man by the name
Of Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

He could imitate Irving, play euchre and pool
And perform on the Spanish Guitar.
In fact, quite the cream of the Muscovite team
Was Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

The ladies all loved him, his rivals were few;
He could drink them all under the bar.
As gallant or tank, there was no one to rank
With Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

One day this bold Russian had shouldered his gun
And donned his most truculent sneer
Downtown he did go, where he trod on the toe
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir

"Young man," quoth Bulbul, "has life grown so dull,
That you're anxious to end your career?
Vile infidel! Know, you have trod on the toe
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir."

"So take your last look at the sunshine and brook
And send your regrets to the Czar;
By this I imply you are going to die,
Mr Ivan Skavinsky Skavar."

Quoth Ivan, "My friend, your remarks, in the end,
Will avail you but little, I fear,
For you ne'er will survive to repeat them alive,
Mr Abdul Abulbul Amir!"

Then this bold mameluke drew his trusty chibouque
With a cry of "Allah Akbar!"
And with murderous intent, he ferociously went
For Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

Then they parried and thrust and they side-stepped and cussed
'Till their blood would have filled a great pot.
The philologist blokes, who seldom crack jokes,
Say that hash was first made on that spot.

They fought all that night, 'neath the pale yellow moon;
The din, it was heard from afar;
And great multitudes came, so great was the fame
of Abdul and Ivan Skavar.

As Abdul's long knife was extracting the life –
In fact, he was shouting "Huzzah!" –
He felt himself struck by that wily Kalmuck,
Count Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

The sultan drove by in his red-breasted fly,
Expecting the victor to cheer;
But he only drew nigh to hear the last sigh
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir.

Czar Petrovich, too, in his spectacles blue
Rode up in his new crested car.
He arrived just in time to exchange a last line
With Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

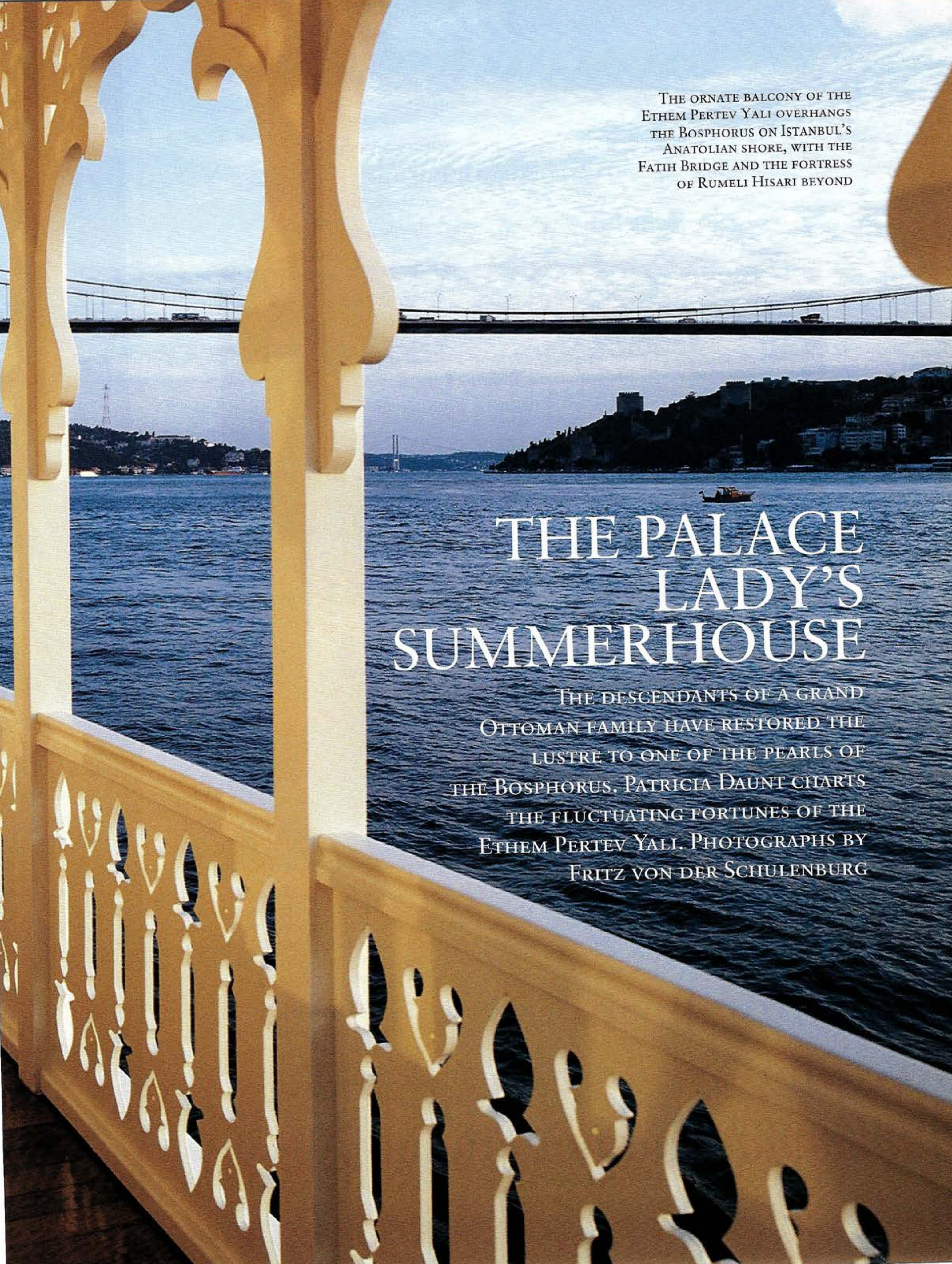
A loud-sounding splash from the Danube was heard
Resounding o'er meadows afar;
It came from the sack fitting close to the back
Of Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

There's a tomb rises up where the blue Danube flows;
Engraved there in characters clear;
"Ah stranger, when passing, please pray for the soul
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir."

A Muscovite maiden her lone vigil keeps,
'Neath the light of the pale polar star;
And the name that she murmurs as oft as she weeps
Is Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

The Crimean War lives on in the lyrics of the 'Ballad of Abdul Abulbul Amir', about the pointlessness of war. Written in 1877 by Percy French, an Irish music-hall entertainer, it has from time to time been revived. The original was plagiarised as soon as it came out, and this version is an amalgam made popular in the 1930s by the American novelty singer Frank Crummit, and more recently recorded by Bill Steele in the 1970s and Charlie King in 2001 ('Brilliant Songs of Ireland').
Those interested in hearing the tune to which these words were set can find it at www.mudcat.org/media/midi/abdulbul.mid

Exhibition: Preziosi's watercolour *Scutari* and the ceramic souvenirs illustrated on these pages can be seen in the show 'Crimean War Memorabilia from the Ömer Koç Collections', opening on December 2, 2006 at Istanbul's Sadberk Hanım Museum The catalogue: edited by Bahattin Öztuncay, with contributions by Norman Stone, Edhem Eldem, Sinan Kuneralp, Bahattin Öztuncay and David Barchard, this will be available online from www.cornucopia.net

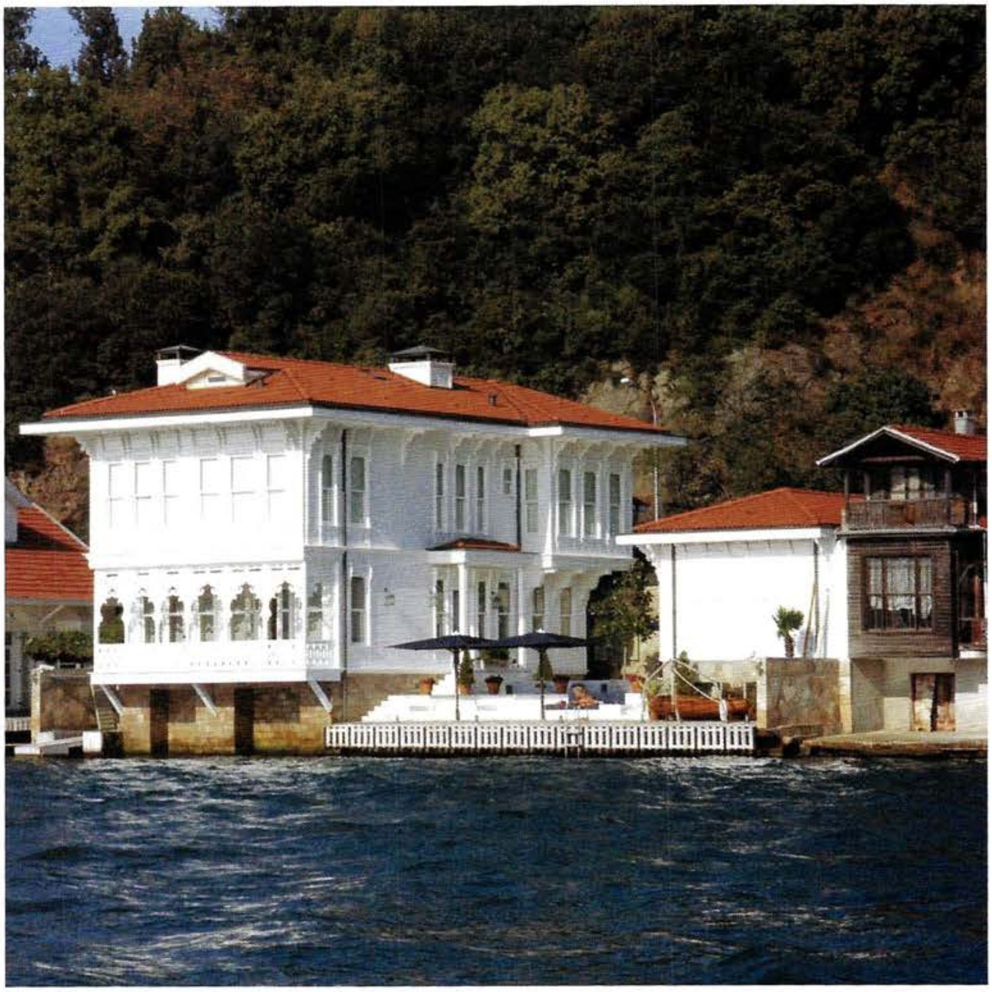


The ornate balcony of the Ethem Pertev Yali overhangs the Bosphorus on Istanbul's Anatolian shore, with the Fatih Bridge and the fortress of Rumeli Hisari beyond

THE PALACE LADY'S SUMMERHOUSE

The descendants of a grand Ottoman family have restored the lustre to one of the pearls of the Bosphorus. Patricia Daunt charts the fluctuating fortunes of the Ethem Pertev Yali. Photographs by Fritz von der Schulenburg

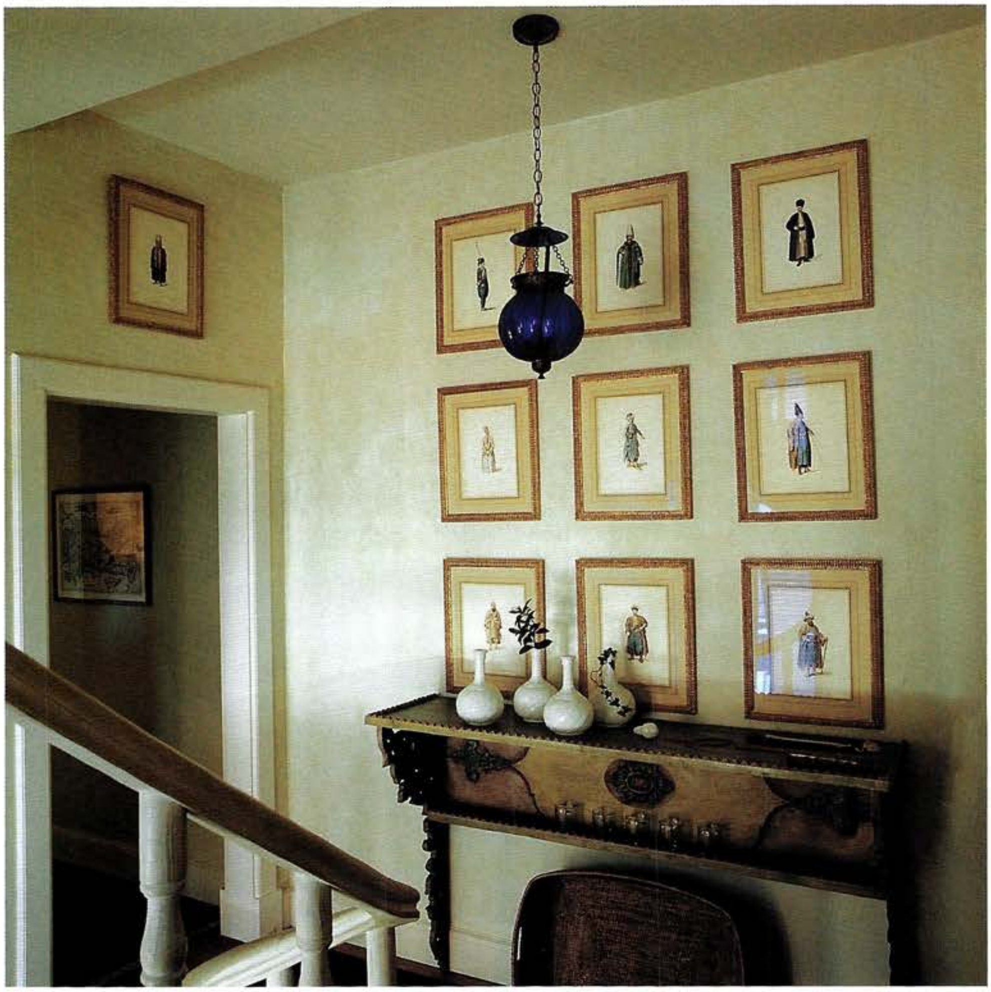
With the Bosphorus running fast and
deep from north to south, the
whole effect was perfectly balanced,
cosmopolitan art nouveau at its best



Above: the eponymous Palace Lady built the original house in the 1860s with only a harem building, seen here on the left. Next to it is the single-storey 'selamlik', or men's quarters, added by the pharmacist Ethem Pertev around 1910. The play of light and shade shows off the patterning on the harem's cantilevered balcony facing the water. Twin boathouses once stood beneath. Opposite: seemingly austere, the new garden by the American landscape architect Patrick Chasse is the perfect stage for entertaining. It accommodates a small raised pool, a minimalist Japanese take on the traditional Islamic garden. Following pages: the elegant drawing room in the harem, formerly two rooms, runs the length of the house and opens onto the balcony.

Silks woven to order in Lyons to old Ottoman designs cover sofas and chairs. Other fabrics, collected in Turkey, cover the cushions, ottomans and, most strikingly, the drawing room pouffe

ETHEM PERTEV WAS THE FIRST TO SELL READY-MADE MEDICINES OVER THE COUNTER IN THE EXPIRING OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND WAS ALREADY A HOUSEHOLD NAME FOR HIS SYRUPS AND POMADES

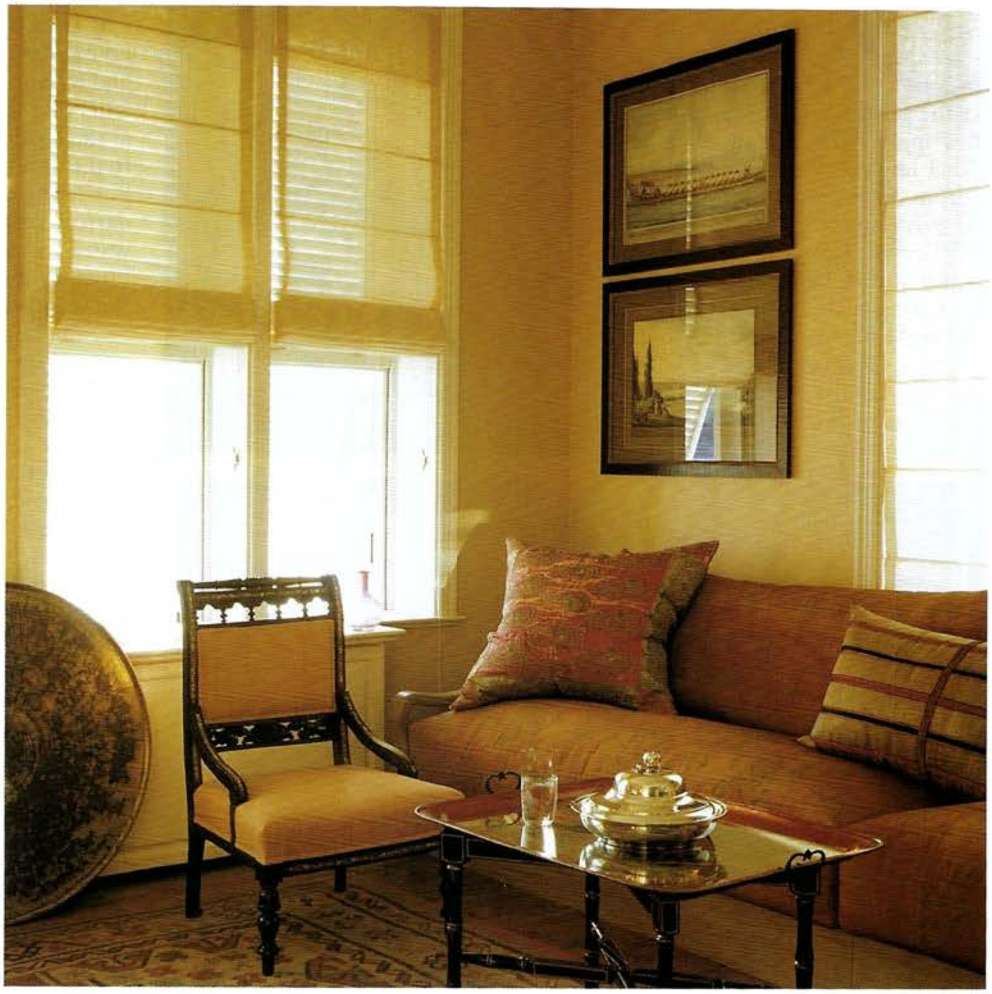


ABOVE: THE HAREM'S 1861 STAIRCASE HAS BEEN TURNED TO ACCOMMODATE A NEW WINDOW IN THE STAIRWELL. A FINE SET OF 18TH-CENTURY PLATES DEPICTING OTTOMAN COSTUMES HANGS ON THE LANDING ABOVE AN UNUSUAL CONSOLE TABLE.

RIGHT: THE 'SELAMLIK' BUILDING, AN ENFILADE OF THREE ROOMS, HAS BEEN TURNED INTO A LIBRARY. THE CENTRAL ROOM HOUSES MOST OF THE BOOKS.

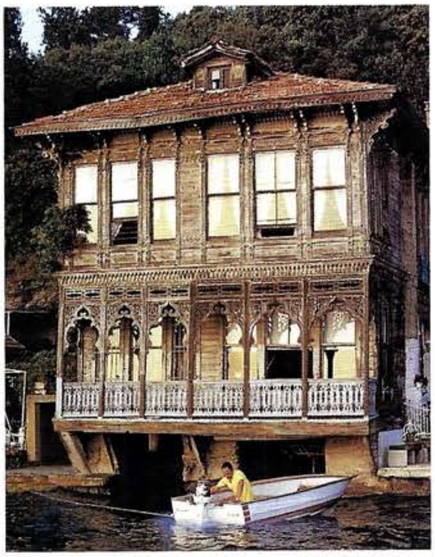
A PAIR OF SCULPTED POUFFES VIES WITH A DECORATIVE PEDESTAL TABLE, MADE TO NINA KÖPRÜLÜ'S DESIGN, WHOSE TOP IS PAINTED TO RESEMBLE RUST-COLOURED GRANITE. THE NEW FLOORBOARDS SET OFF A HANDSOME KILIM. THE HOUSE IS FULL OF VIEWS OF ISTANBUL: EARLY PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES ROBERTSON, 18TH-CENTURY PANORAMAS BY LUIGI AND CARLA MAYER AND ENGRAVINGS BY ANTOINE MELLING

All the paints replicate the pale colours used on the Bosphorus as the nineteenth gave way to the twentieth century



An international team was called on to restore the house and gather its furnishings in a spirit of Oriental sensibility. The ravishing decor was masterminded by Mica Ertegün. Left: the late-Ottoman brass four-poster bed, discovered in New York, dominates the romantic bedroom used by the Köprülüs' daughter, Süreyya; the room is painted lavender-blue and its white ceiling has been delicately stencilled with repeating floral sprays. Above: a corner of the reading room in the 'selamlik', with its traditional low divan and tray table

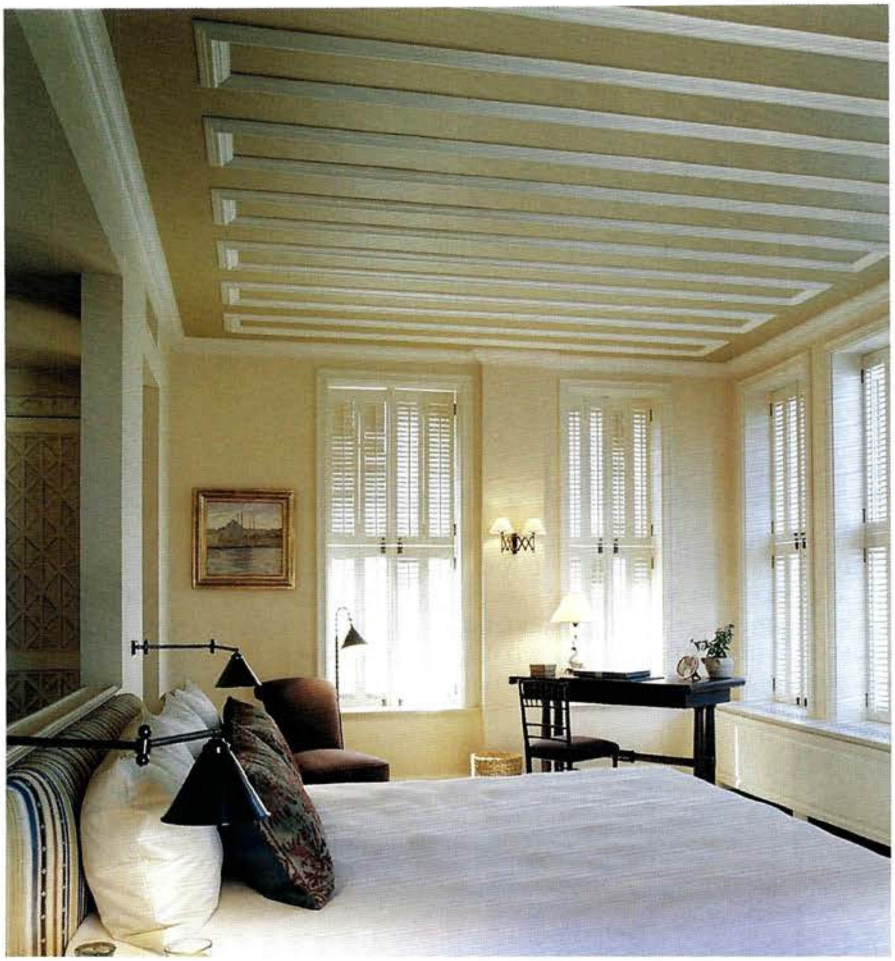
One of the many joys of the Bosphorus is to arrange a boat to take you out at dawn, when a breathless silence lies over the great waterway. As the sun slides up over the eastern hills, the houses that line the Asian shore emerge from the habitual film of mist, first as greyish outlines, then in soft colours reflected sharply in the still-black water of the channel. It was on one such outing that, looking north from below the Second Bosphorus Bridge towards Kanlıca, I first saw and grew curious about a small blanched wooden yalı far less spectacular than some of its more ancient Ottoman-red neighbours. It was its elegance that caught the eye.



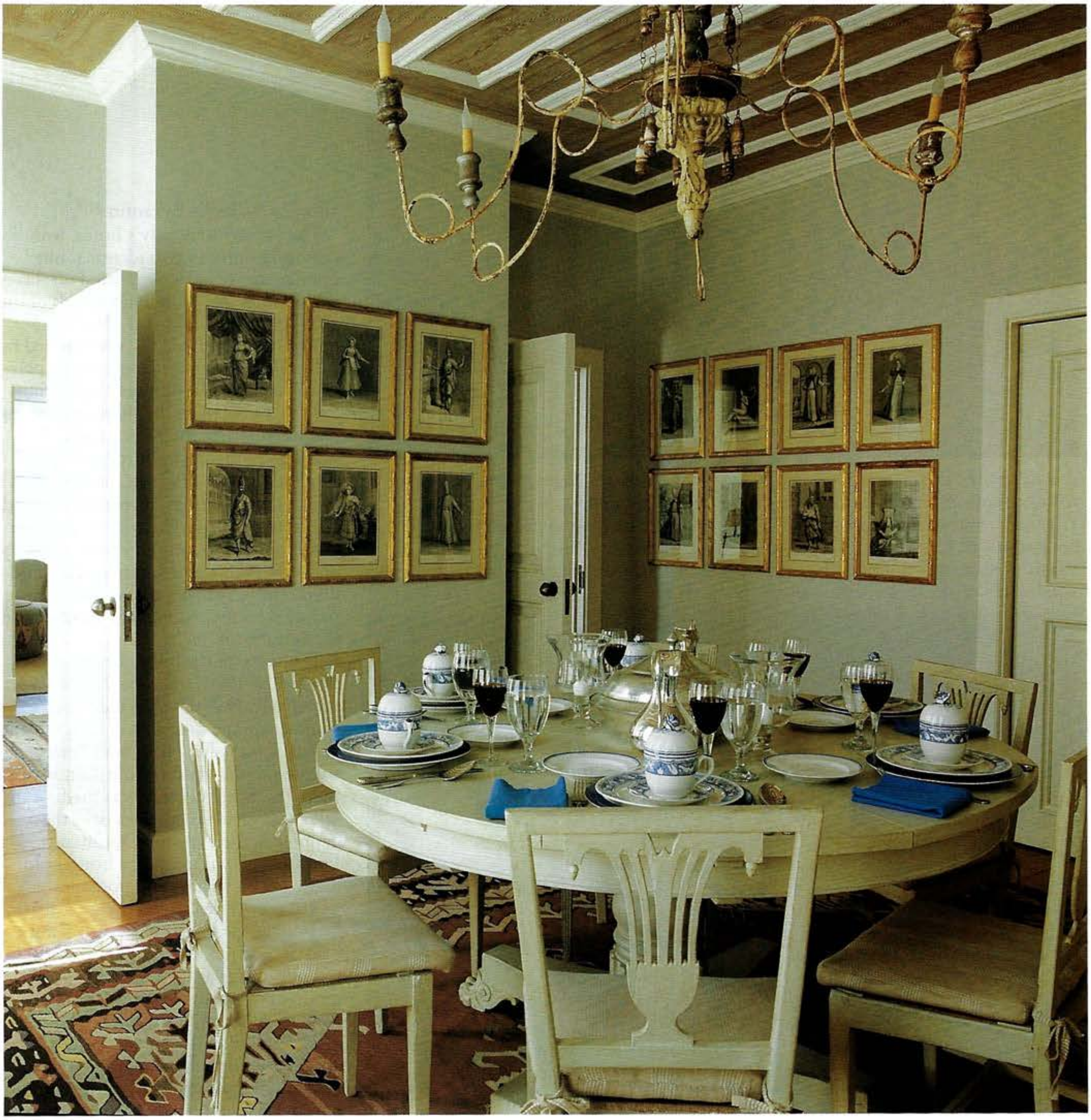
So I was not entirely unprepared when, last August, I was invited by this magazine to have a critical look at the house, the Ethem Pertev Yalı, which had recently been restored by Murat and Nina Köprülü. I was dropped off at the Kanlıca ferry station and walked to the gate of the house a couple of hundred yards downstream, along the narrow road squeezed between the water and the unspoilt wooded hillside. I found the blanched wooden exterior now renewed and painted a pure white – symbol of the meticulous restoration effected on a dazzlingly elegant example of late-nineteenth-century Ottoman architecture.

Yalı is a generic term used to describe the wooden houses of the Bosphorus, which have captured the imagination of generations of travellers. They were victims of fluctuating family fortunes during a decaying Ottoman Empire, a new Turkish Republic, two world wars and three revolutions. The ups and downs of the late twentieth century took a heavy toll. Until the 1980s, new houses were preferred to expensive restoration of these fragile structures, which fell victim to fashion, fire and neglect.

But, as the 1980s gave way to the 1990s and 2000, fashion, and with it serious money, returned to the Bosphorus. The Köprülüs are the latest, and among the most successful, to restore a national treasure that might otherwise have been lost.



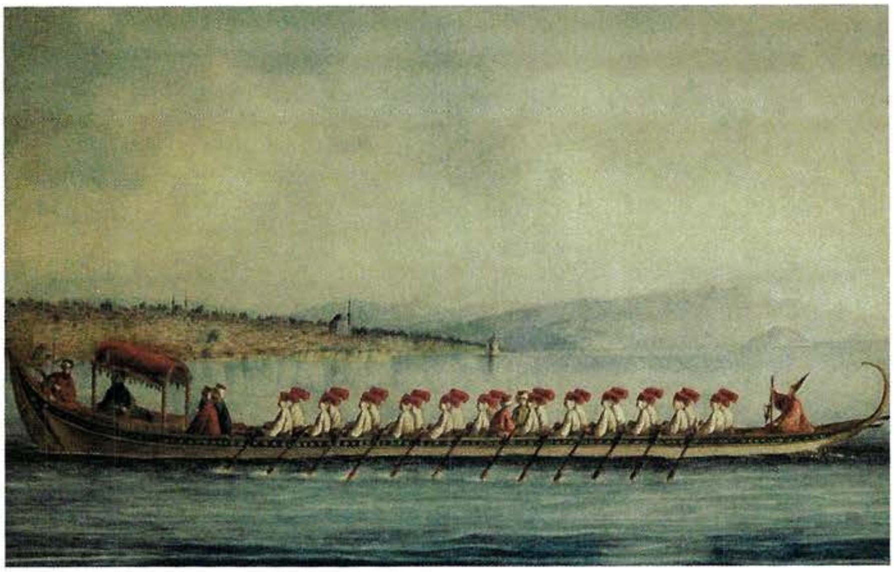
TOP: ELEGANT, ROMANTIC AND THREATENED WITH DECAY, OR WORSE, THE ETHEM PERTEV YALI AS IT APPEARED IN CORNUCOPIA IN 1993, ITS TIMBERS BLEACHED TO A SILVERY GREY, ITS BOATHOUSES STILL IN EVIDENCE. LEFT: THE MASTER BEDROOM NOW RUNS THE LENGTH OF THE HAREM ON THE FIRST FLOOR AND HAS SPECTACULAR VIEWS UP, DOWN AND ACROSS THE BOSPHORUS THROUGH TEN LONG WINDOWS. PLANTATION SHUTTERS PLAY THE ROLE OF THE OLD OTTOMAN LATTICEWORK



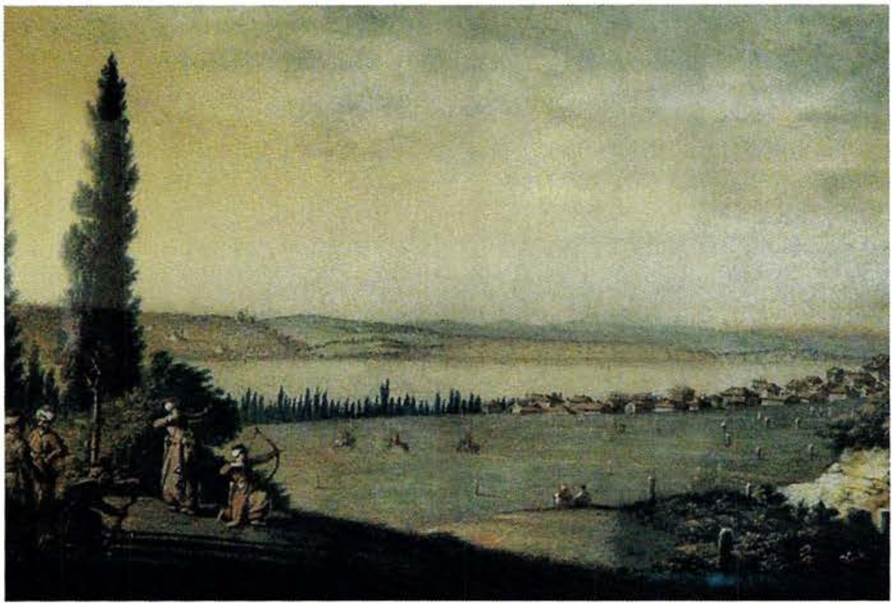
ABOVE: THE SQUARE GREY-BLUE DINING ROOM HAS A FIN-DE-SIÈCLE CHANDELIER FROM THE PARIS AUCTION HOUSE OF TAJAN. THE CEILING HAS BEEN RAISED AND PAINTED IN ITS ORIGINAL COLOURS. THE FRENCH-GREY PEDESTAL DINING TABLE AND CARVED CHAIRS ARE GOOD REPRODUCTIONS. PRIDE OF PLACE GOES TO AN IMPORTANT SET OF 24 ENGRAVINGS OF OTTOMAN FIGURES BY LE HAY AFTER VANMOUR. THEY ARE DATED 1714

As far as I know, the Ethem Pertev Yalı is the only house on the Bosphorus built by a woman about whom nothing is known for certain except the year of her death. The only clue to her in the house that she lived in for almost five decades lies in its naming. Although officially it bears not her name but the name of its second owner, Ethem Pertev, a man, the building is referred to in some accounts as "the Palace Lady's Summerhouse", "the Veiled Lady's House" and also as "the Decorated Building". Surprisingly for a relatively recent building, those names and the assertion that it was a sultan's gift is about all we have to go on from written sources in speculating about its origins.

The Palace Lady's Summerhouse is said to have been built in the early 1860s. The dating seems right, both stylistically and in relation to the development of the Bosphorus shoreline. So the gift may well have been made in 1861, following the death



The Köprülüs collect far and wide and the paintings in the yali are its treasures. This page: the watercolours of the Bosphorus in the library belong to a set of 26 studies bought 20 years ago in New York. They were painted by Admiral Sir Henry Byam Martin as a junior naval officer in 1835. Right: the drawing room has two oil sketches by Vanmour and eight Melling engravings of Istanbul, c1800, found in Washington 15 years ago



of the extravagant, reforming Sultan Abülmecit, who loved women as much as presiding over the political reforms of the *Tanzimat*. It is probable that the recipient was not one of the palace concubines – women who enjoyed exceptional licence, whose veils "were the thinnest in the city" and who were seen "flying around the Bosphorus rowed by handsome boatmen, their thin gauze *ferace* cloaks quite transparent". More likely, she was one of the children born and brought up in the palace, perhaps Georgian. Ottoman law safeguarded these children. Emine Foat Tugay writes that after the father's death there was no legal difference between such a child and the children by the legal wife as to either status or inheritance. The mother, on the other hand, could only inherit if she was legally married.

At all events, the lady in question was evidently still young, as she died only in 1908, and the gift modest: a small site which was doubtless chosen to take advantage of a sweeping view of the upper and lower channel and also of a valuable Byzantine well.

The anonymous lady's house was curiously built: in two identical but quite separate units supported on three piers which stood on the bedrock of the channel. Two floors and a loft were linked internally and are now circled by a decorated balcony; below was a pair of *kayıkhane* (boathouses) occupying the spaces between the three supporting piers. Doubtless the Palace Lady furnished the house appropriately: porcelain, glass and rugs, as well as books and paintings, displayed to good effect in the sea-facing rooms. But to a contemporary observer it was probably no more than a small, timber-clad mid-nineteenth-century yalı overhung by a red-tiled roof: a vernacular common on the Bosphorus.

The story of the house becomes less obscure in 1905, once the Palace Lady, perhaps by that time too elderly to summer on the Bosphorus, let it out for its excellent fishing to Ethem Pertev, a successful pharmacist from Tirnova in Bulgaria. Ethem Pertev was the first to sell ready-made medicines over the counter in the expiring Ottoman Empire and was already a household name for his syrups and pomades. Three years later, on its owner's death, he bought the yalı and then a vacant plot of land next to it, in order to build upon it the separate *selamlık* – men's quarters – essential to any Ottoman gentleman's establishment.

By 1910, the yalı, tucked beneath the steep Bosphorus hillside, was undergoing radical building work. The harem was renovated. The timbers of all four façades were renewed to give the appearance of a building at once fashionable and cosmopolitan: in the riot of arabesque scrolling, every eave, string-course, portico, door or window frame was restored.

It may have been then that the sea-facing mansard window was added to crown the wide, tiled roof. It was certainly then that the real glory of the house, the ornately carved balcony cantilevered over the water on stout brackets, was reworked to give the impression of being wrapped round the

lower floor, holding the two halves of the building together. Not only is its very position over the water a delight, but the cantilevering is set to discourage the wash of passing boats from affecting the living quarters, and its screening obstructs the gaze of any curious passer-by. While protecting against wind and wave, it allows perfect privacy to a household enjoying the channel unseen through a screen of handsome bargeboards separating six irregular niches carved in seemingly inexhaustible varieties of decorative patterning.

A handsome, well-proportioned, timber-clad, single-storey *selamlık*, painted white to match the harem, was built by Pertev on the newly acquired plot of land. A square of garden separated the two buildings. Fronted by the quay, and with the Bosphorus running fast and deep from north to south, the whole effect was perfectly balanced: cosmopolitan art nouveau at its best. It must have been at this point that the yalı that Ethem Pertev had bought from the Palace Lady acquired the sobriquet "the Decorated Building".

Ethem Pertev and his house evidently came successfully through the 1914–18 war and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The manufacture and export of Pertev products for health, beauty and cleanliness – toothpaste, face creams, shampoo and brilliantines – flourished more than ever following the declaration of the New Republic in 1923. Pertev, who is remembered for his part in training a new generation of pharmacists, was the Turkish tycoon of his day.

The Pertev story was to end in tragedy, however. The youngest son was killed in one of the yalı's boathouses while tending to the boats during a storm. Ethem lost all interest in fishing off the quay. He no longer had the will to bend pins to make fish-hooks and bait them with olives and pomegranate seed. In 1927, he died a broken man. Five years later his surviving children sold the house.

Some sources claim that Hayri Kaptan, the Captain of the No 74 ferryboat, bought the yalı from Ethem Pertev. The captain was a popular Kanlıca man who ran the cleanest, swiftest and most reliable ferryboat on the entire Bosphorus. His punctuality was proverbial and his schedule included the morning and evening runs. When the ferry left and arrived back at the *iskele*, or landing stage, its hoots were part of all Kanlıca's daily time-keeping. Perhaps it was village pride wanting to keep the jovial captain's memory alive that ascribed ownership of the yalı to him.

There is no doubt about the fact that in 1932 the house was bought by Mürşide Güneşin, a widow with two young sons, Adnan and Irfan. Fire had destroyed their family townhouse in old Stamboul. Possibly she bought in Kanlıca because she knew the village: two Cenani cousins with whom she shared a common grandfather were already living there.

Mürşide Güneşin occupied the Ethem Pertev Yalı for three decades, until her death in 1963. It was a time of privations: the Second World War was followed by shortages in the Inönü and Menderes years. The only repair work that seems to have taken place was some necessary patching-up in the 1940s after a freak accident, when a ferry coming down the Bosphorus in fog slammed into the harem. The captain found himself, still in the wheelhouse, confronted by Mürşide Hanım two metres away in bed. She is alleged to have calmly asked him to leave before she herself left the room, closing the door behind her: she was lucky to escape with her life.

THE 'SELSEBIL', OR CASCADING FOUNTAIN, IN THE GARDEN, IS A 19TH-CENTURY REPRODUCTION CARVED FROM MARMARA MARBLE

Nor did Mürşide Hanım's two sons, both married with children and using the two parts of the yalı only to summer in, undertake the restoration which was becoming ever more urgently needed. To accommodate their increasing needs, a concrete structure which came to be known as "the bunker" was built in the quadrangle.

> THE SEVEN BATHROOMS FOR SEVEN BEDROOMS WERE ACHIEVED WITHOUT VIOLENCE TO THE ORIGINAL STRUCTURE

By 1998, the yalı's once-white timbers were bleached to a silvery grey, rotted and splintered. Bits of old tin patched the worst of the gaps and leaks. The dilapidated iron fence that ran along the quay posed little challenge to trespassers from the sea, and the quay itself was more concrete than stone. When the art nouveau steps leading up to the *selamlık*'s front door, which were studded with iron rods that once supported vines and creepers, became dangerous, and a neighbouring wistaria which for years had smothered the walls of both houses invaded the inside of the harem, the time had come for the family to take stock: the yalı was falling down.

News reached Murat and Nina Köprülü in 1998 that Adnan and Irfan Güneşin's daughters, the grandchildren of Mürşide Hanım, were thinking of selling the family's summerhouse. The Köprülüs had long been on the lookout for a yalı. Murat's association with the Bosphorus reaches back to the days when Köprülüs were second only to sultans. The legendary seventeenth-century Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha Yalı above Anadoluhisarı, the oldest surviving building on the Bosphorus, was built by his forebear, the last of the five Köprülü grand viziers. Though American, Nina was no stranger to Turkey when she married Murat. As a child, she had spent her summers at Aphrodisias, where her godfather, the late Kenan Erim, directed excavations and her mother, Martha Joukowsky, worked on the Bronze Age mound behind the theatre. She herself was well versed in the fine arts and classical architecture.

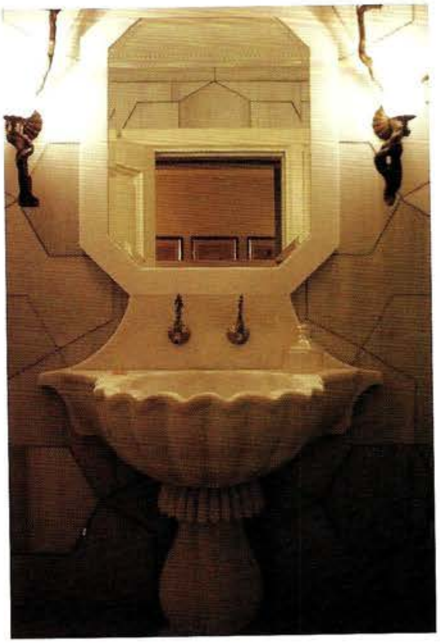
The following year, 1999, Nina found time to visit the yalı on a lightning visit to Istanbul. It was a *coup de foudre*: the sale was sealed. But that was the easy part. The young Köprülüs soon realised that, if they were to achieve the authentic restoration the house demanded, a bedrock-to-rooftop rebuild must be undertaken.

Work began in 2001. As the building was dismantled under the stewardship of the architect Mark Butler, who was engaged on restoring his own Sumahan Hotel building further down the Bosphorus, it became clear that neither structure nor ornament could be preserved for reuse. But simple demolition and rebuild was not an option if authenticity was to be achieved. The expertise of Hüseyin Öztürk and his firm of contract builders gave the resourceful Nina the courage to go through with the project. Painstaking dismantling was undertaken and every surviving feature and its original material was minutely recorded. A worldwide search was then on for those materials and for the craftsmen who could produce workmanship of the quality that had gone into the Palace Lady's harem and Ethem Pertev's later *selamlık*.

To keep the profile as it originally was, the first task was to rebuild the piers of the two boathouses so as to support the structure rising above them. The digger for this job was not wasted. Excavation work was carried on into the hillside, scooping out a great pit to make a fine new interior kitchen. This innovation was part of the answer to the familiar problem of the restorer: how to provide the modern conveniences that a yalı always lacks with minimum prejudice to aesthetics and authenticity. Elsewhere, the architects were more radical: air conditioning was installed, and seven bathrooms for the seven bedrooms were achieved without violence to the original structure – two fitted into the loft, three went on the second floor and two in the bunker, now transformed into an annexe for guests.

The most contentious change, which seemed to me also to be the most successful, was to replace the two sea-facing rooms on both floors of the harem by single long, spacious rooms, effectively unifying the two separate halves of the building. Each has ten windows: the six that face the sea remain irregularly spaced, and there are two on the north side and two on the south. Cunningly, the Turkish pine staircase with its cedar banister rail has been turned, to give more room on the upstairs landing, and carried on up to the attic.

When it came to materials and workmanship, change was kept to the minimum. Finding stone for the cladding of both harem and *selamlık* happily proved easy: the original quarry forty miles from Istanbul at Gebze was still open. Extra stone was ordered to clad the bunker. The same stone suited the masons, for their work on the quay, and also the garden designers, for rebuilding the steps and pathways.



ABOVE: MADE FROM A SINGLE PIECE OF TURKISH MARBLE, THIS LARGE SCALLOPED BASIN IS IN THE POWDER ROOM IN THE BASEMENT OF THE HAREM BUILDING

CENTRE: AN ANATOLIAN DOWRY CHEST IN AN ATTIC BEDROOM SITS ON A SISAL CARPET PAINTED WITH A CLASSIC OTTOMAN MOTIF. ABOVE: A SIMPLE CHAIR IS ENLIVENED BY A SUSANI TEXTILE

If it was not available in Turkey, all the necessary wood was brought from Canada, kiln-dried and ready for use: American cedar and pine for the cladding of the houses, teak for the decorative facings. The quest for harmony, if not complete authenticity, which by now was unattainable, even stretched to casting all the brass fittings in the United States. A single fine, if damaged, brass doorknob had survived on an outside door and another on a garden gate. They were duly copied to perfection.

Patrick Chasse, who teaches landscape architecture at Harvard, specialising in Japanese gardens and the Japanese principle of hide and reveal, took on the task of transforming the courtyard between harem and *selamlık*. He spent three months studying the Ottoman garden, taking note to plant nothing that had arrived on the Bosphorus later than 1910. Hydrangeas, magnolias, pencil cypresses, roses, the original wistaria, tamed and retrained, and a fountain where the Byzantine well was discovered, set off the one distinctly non-Ottoman feature: a small swimming pool in the centre of the garden.

The watchword for the interior designer, Mica Ertegün, was "Oriental sensibility", as well as authenticity in such matters as reproduction of the original patterning on the ceilings and decorated wooden ends to the new sofas. Fabrics, hand-stencilled for the most part, were sourced from Paris, as were chandeliers in the dining room and library. All the paints replicate the pale colours used on the Bosphorus as the nineteenth gave way to the twentieth century. Pictures and furniture were acquired with similar care over period and taste.

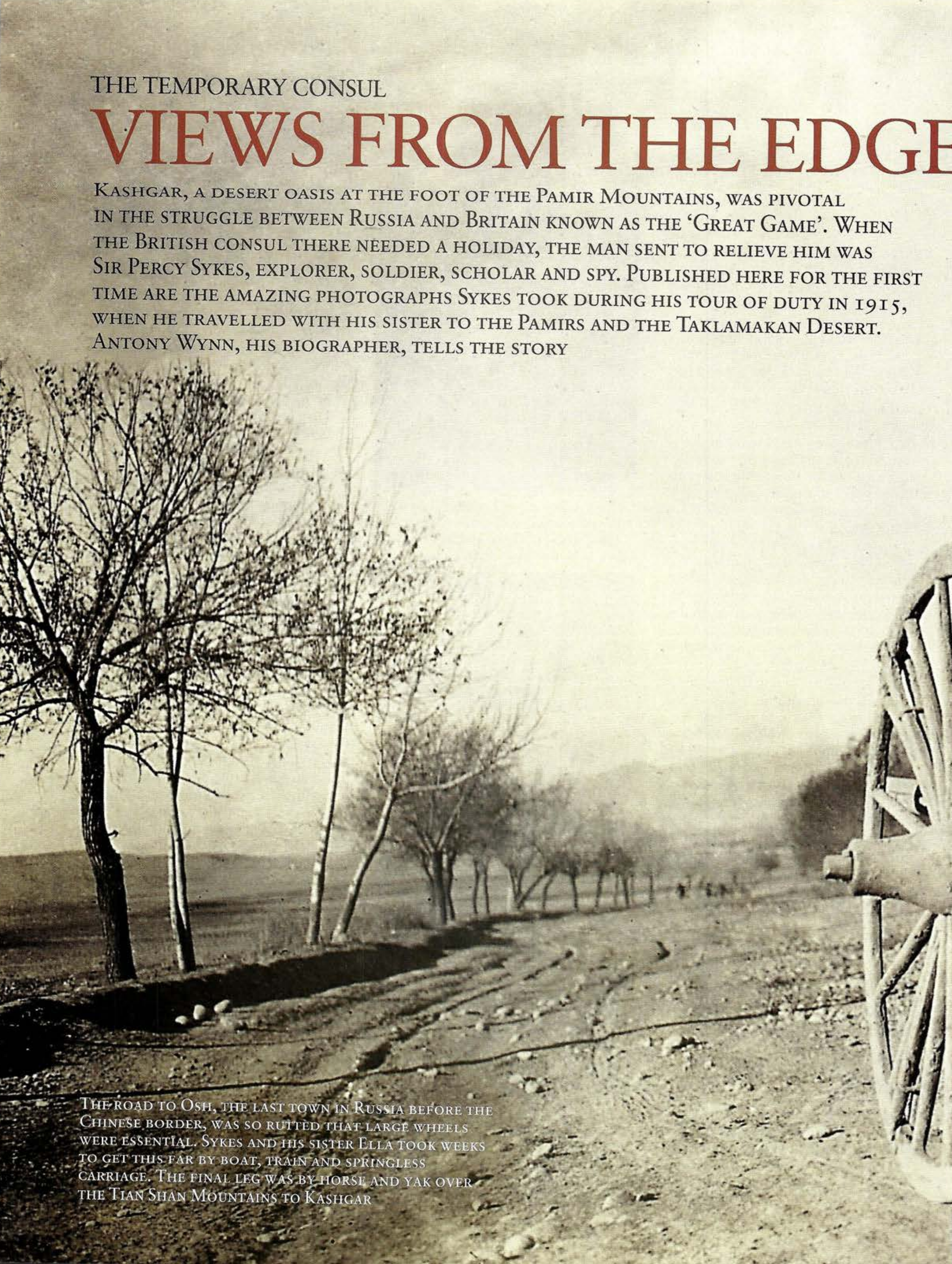
When the Ethem Pertev Yalı was finally ready in 2004 for the Köprülüs to move in, one final authentic touch was added: a 1906-model dinghy designed by Rifat Edin. Gilt on an elegant gingerbread. ◆

For a complete list of articles on the yalıs of the Bosphorus by Patricia Daunt, visit our website, www.cornucopia.net

THE TEMPORARY CONSUL

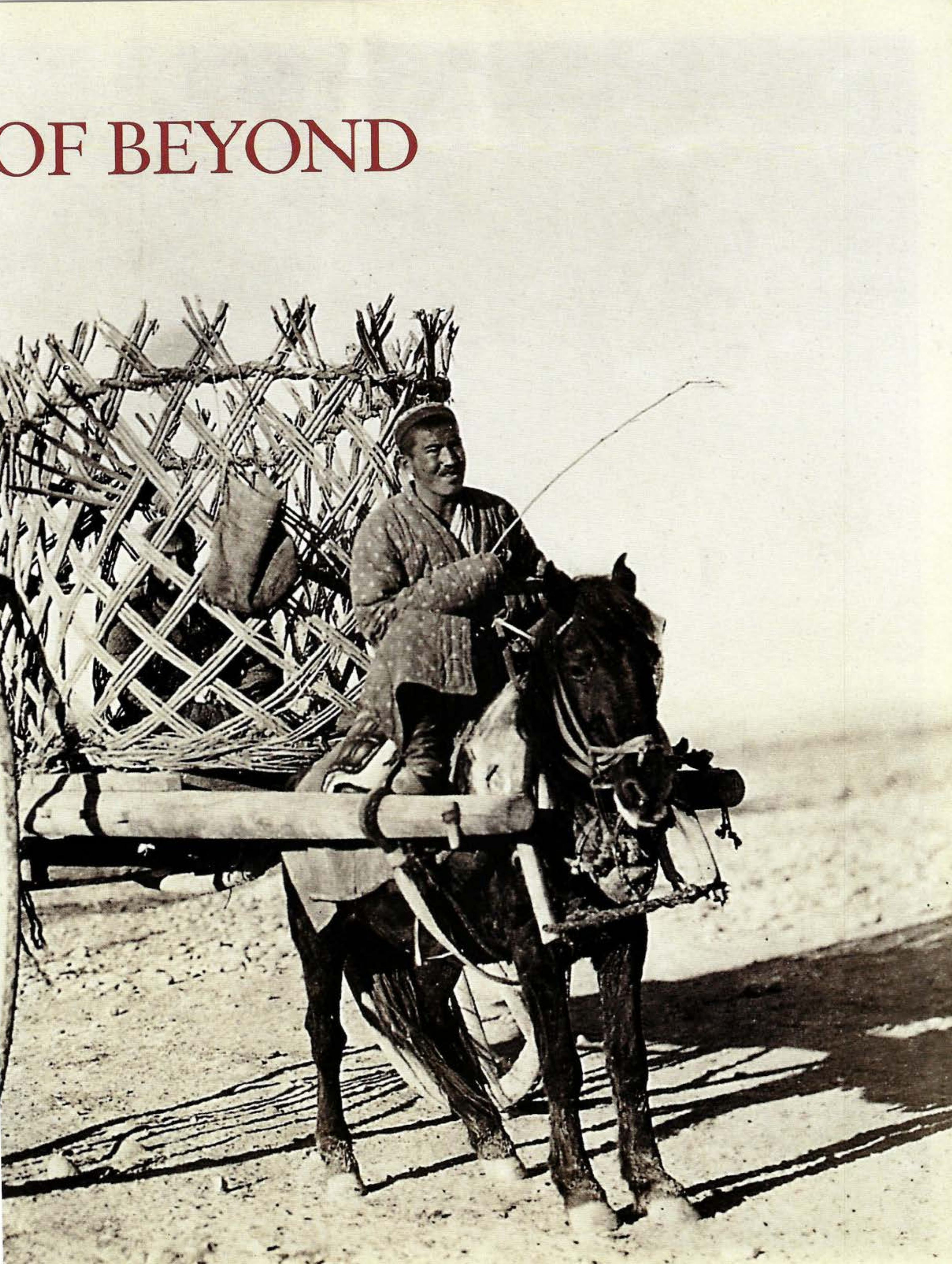
VIEWS FROM THE EDGE

KASHGAR, A DESERT OASIS AT THE FOOT OF THE PAMIR MOUNTAINS, WAS PIVOTAL IN THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BRITAIN KNOWN AS THE 'GREAT GAME'. WHEN THE BRITISH CONSUL THERE NEEDED A HOLIDAY, THE MAN SENT TO RELIEVE HIM WAS SIR PERCY SYKES, EXPLORER, SOLDIER, SCHOLAR AND SPY. PUBLISHED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME ARE THE AMAZING PHOTOGRAPHS SYKES TOOK DURING HIS TOUR OF DUTY IN 1915, WHEN HE TRAVELLED WITH HIS SISTER TO THE PAMIRS AND THE TAKLAMAKAN DESERT. ANTONY WYNN, HIS BIOGRAPHER, TELLS THE STORY



THE ROAD TO OSH, THE LAST TOWN IN RUSSIA BEFORE THE CHINESE BORDER, WAS SO RUTTED THAT LARGE WHEELS WERE ESSENTIAL. SYKES AND HIS SISTER ELLA TOOK WEEKS TO GET THIS FAR BY BOAT, TRAIN AND SPRINGLESS CARRIAGE. THE FINAL LEG WAS BY HORSE AND YAK OVER THE TIAN SHAN MOUNTAINS TO KASHGAR

OF BEYOND



Our man in Kashgar, George Macartney (in the flat cap second from right), whom Sykes relieved, sitting with the Chinese 'taoyin' (governor) and officials in Kashgar. In all his 24 years in Eastern Turkestan Macartney had only been allowed two home leaves. His mother was Chinese and his wife, acquired on his first home leave, was Scottish

The temporary consul

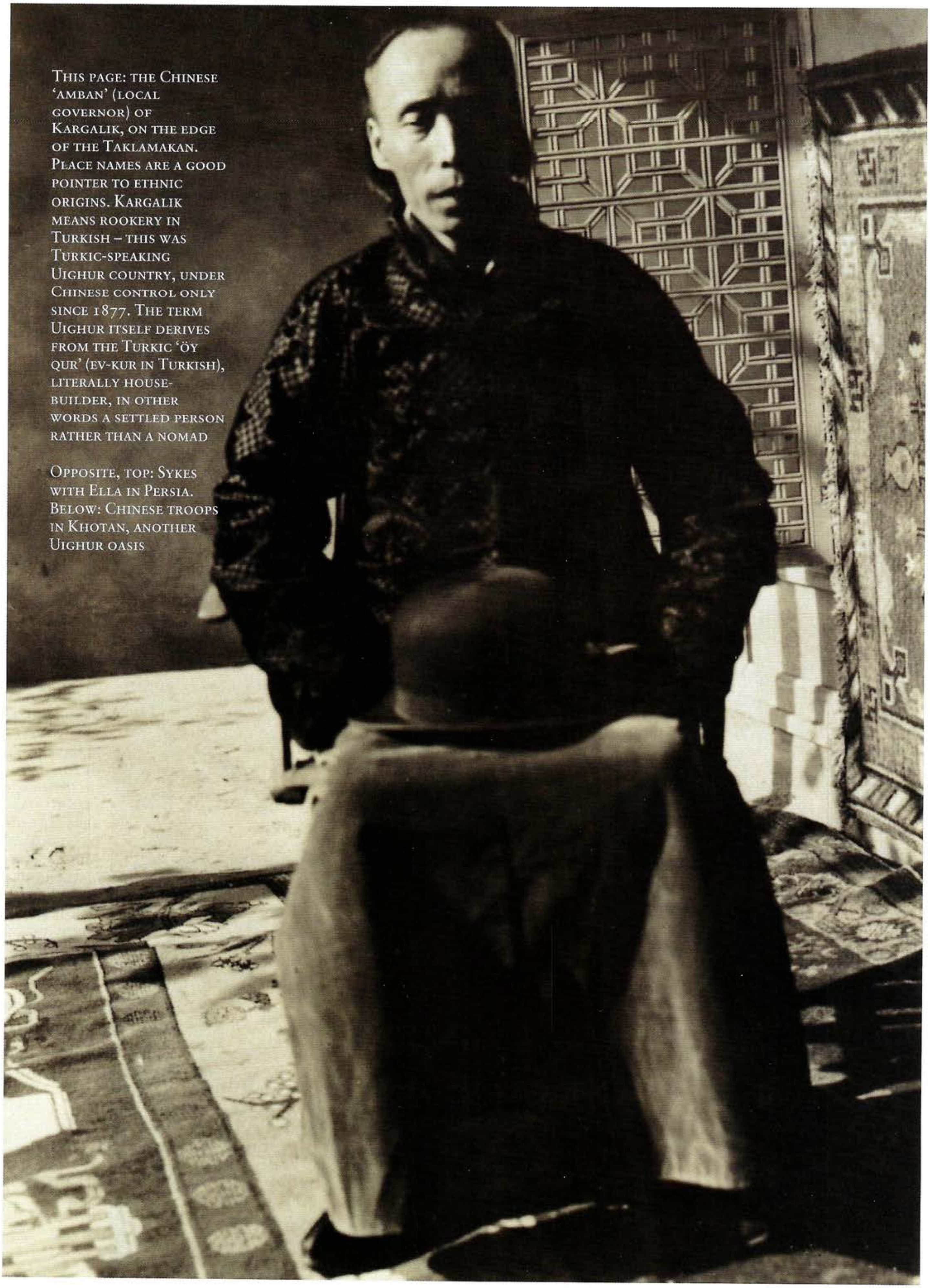
The city of Kashgar in Eastern Turkestan, at the foot of the Chinese side of the Pamirs, lies at the centre of a triangle, with Russia to the west, China to the east and India to the south. In the late nineteenth century it was at the centre of the Great Game. Peopled largely by Muslim Turkic-speaking Uighurs, this was the westernmost part of the Chinese empire, but internal communications were so bad that Peking had only a very loose hold over the province. To reach Kashgar, Chinese goods had to be shipped by sea through the Bosphorus to Batumi on the Black Sea, then overland to Baku, then by ferry across the Caspian to Krasnovodsk, to join the Russian railway via Samarkand to Andijan. From there it was a matter of carts, pack ponies, yaks and camels to Kashgar. It was far easier for Kashgari merchants to trade with Russia.

At the end of 1890 the British government of India became concerned by Russian penetration of the area and sent George Macartney out to establish a British consulate at Kashgar and keep an eye on Russian activity. By 1915 he had been there for twenty-four years and had been granted only two home leaves. The authorities felt that, twelve years after his previous leave, Macartney might deserve a short break.

The person sent to relieve him was Sir Percy Sykes. Sykes had been a consul in eastern Persia since 1894 and was a noted explorer. His wife felt it beyond the call of duty to accompany him to this remotest of British outposts with their six small children, so Sykes took his unmarried sister Ella to keep house for him. She was a tough and fearless traveller, who had ridden from one end of Persia to the other with her brother fifteen years earlier. They took a series of trains through Russia to Tashkent and Andijan, and then a springless carriage to Osh, the last town in Russia before the pass over to Kashgar. The final part of the journey was by horse and yak, staying in very primitive accommodation on the way.

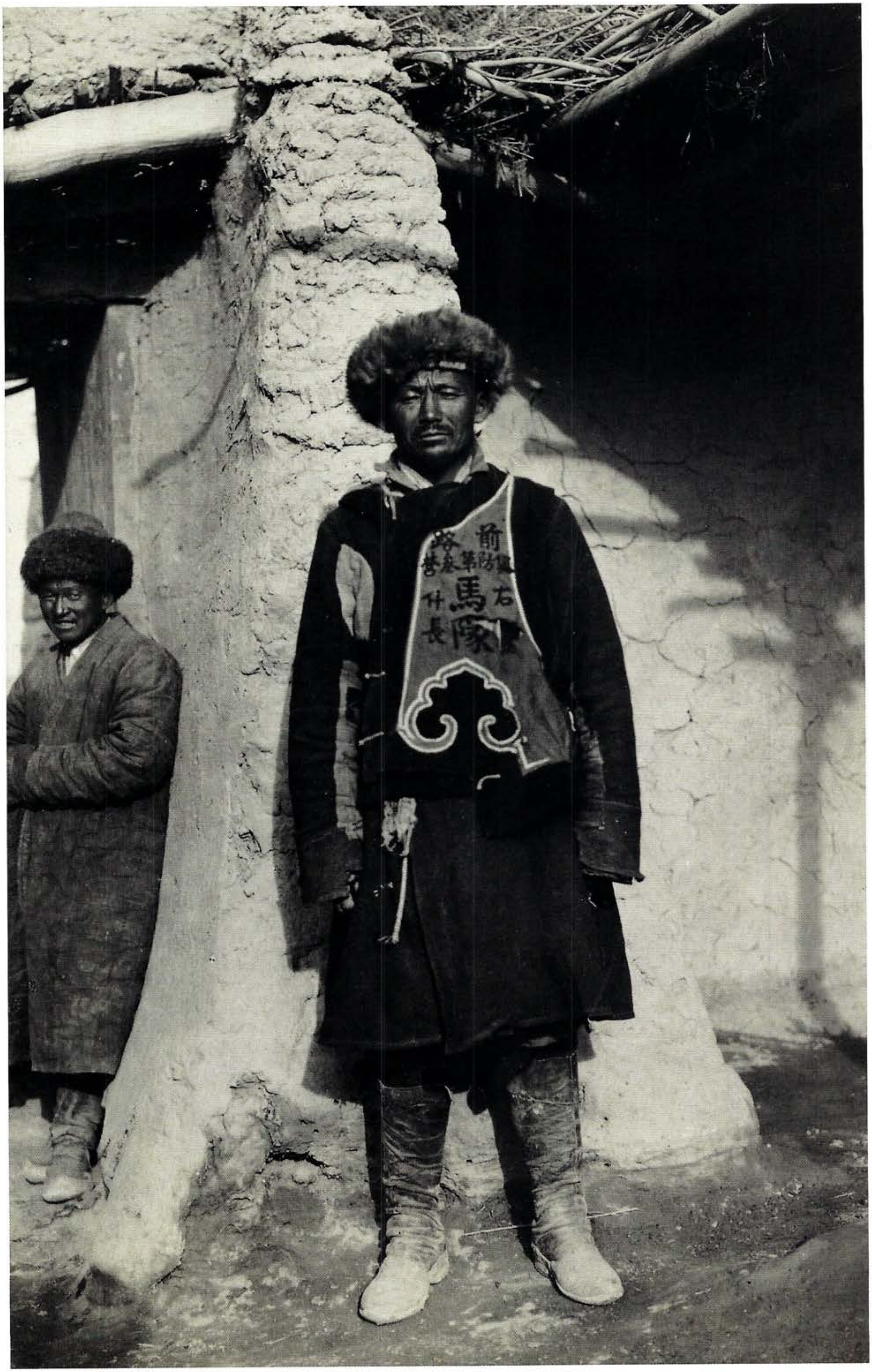
Kashgar was the most isolated of British consulates at that time. Despatches to India took three weeks to get there by runner, and social life was limited. Aside from a dozen rather boisterous Russians at the consulate, there were some dour

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF SIR PERCY SYKES PUBLISHED BY KIND PERMISSION OF TRISTRAM SYKES



This page: the Chinese 'amban' (local governor) of Kargalik, on the edge of the Taklamakan. Place names are a good pointer to ethnic origins. Kargalik means rookery in Turkish – this was Turkic-speaking Uighur country, under Chinese control only since 1877. The term Uighur itself derives from the Turkic 'öy qur' (ev-kur in Turkish), literally house-builder, in other words a settled person rather than a nomad

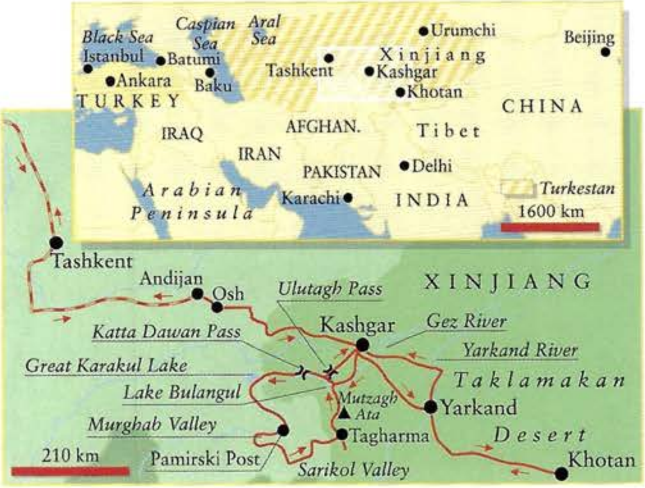
Opposite, top: Sykes with Ella in Persia. Below: Chinese troops in Khotan, another Uighur oasis



Left: a runner of the yamen (Chinese government office) at Yarkand. Runners were the equivalent of the pony express between far-flung government offices

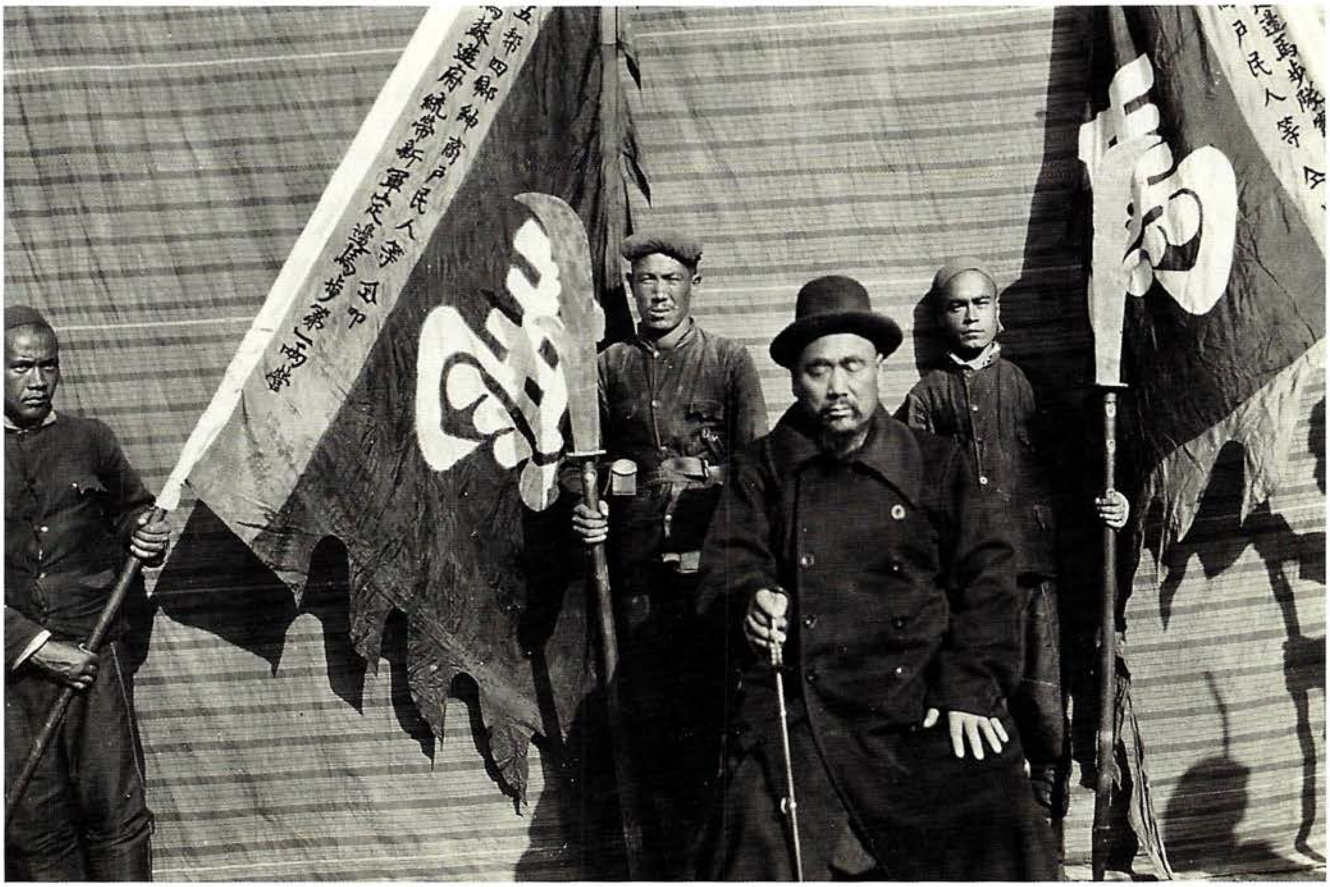
Opposite: Russian officers and a laden Bactrian camel at the Pamirski Post on the western side of the Tian Shan Mountains. Russia was allied with Britain against Germany and Ottoman Turkey during the First World War, and was anxious to frustrate Turkish attempts to stir up the Turkic world in Central Asia. Sykes, always suspicious of Russian intentions, was keen to map the area. The outpost overlooked the Mughab, or Aksu, Valley, one of the headwaters of the Oxus and the watershed between the eastern Russian empire and British India teetotal Swedish medical missionaries, who disapproved of the Russians and would have nothing to do with them. The Russians were good company, but their idea of a decent dinner party was one that ended at dawn, which was a little trying for Ella. Another problem for her was the consulate cook, who tried but failed to make his rock cakes rise by inadvertently using, instead of baking powder, the arsenic powder kept for curing the skins of animals and birds that Sykes had shot.

In 1877 China had regained control of Eastern Turkestan from the local Uighur beys. At the end of 1911 the republican Sun Yat-Sen revolted against the corrupt Manchu emperors, throwing the country into a state of turmoil. Chinese Turkestan was split between the republicans and the supporters of the Manchus. Stray packs of unpaid disbanded soldiers added to the violence of the upheavals and, on top of that, there was a local nationalist movement to secede altogether from China. The Russians, on the usual pretext of protecting foreign subjects in danger, had sent in a thousand Cossacks and four hundred riflemen, whom the Chinese were unable to resist. The Russians were one step closer to India.


Black Sea
Caspian Sea
Aral Sea
Istanbul
Batumi
Ankara
Baku
TURKEY
Tashkent
Urumchi
Xinjiang
Kashgar
Khotan
Beijing
CHINA
IRAQ
IRAN
AFGHAN.
Tibet
PAKISTAN
Delhi
Arabian Peninsula
Karachi
INDIA
Turkestan
1600 km
Tashkent
Andijan
Osh
Ulutagh Pass
XINJIANG
Katta Dawan Pass
Kashgar
Gez River
Yarkand River
Great Karakul Lake
Taklamakan Desert
Lake Bulangul
Mutzagh Ata
Yarkand
Murghab Valley
Tagharma
210 km
Pamirski Post
Sarikol Valley
Khotan

As the Great War spread, the Turkic-speaking province of Eastern Turkestan became of interest to the Germans and their Turkish allies, who, in the view of the British in India, were dreaming of "setting the East ablaze" with an Islamic revolt that would sweep all the way to India and destroy the British Empire. Turkish agents began to use Eastern Turkestan as a base from which to stir up the tribes on the borders of India and in Russian Turkestan. In February 1915 a party of five Turks appeared in Kashgar. Macartney learned that in the spring they intended to travel to Afghanistan and attempt to incite the Afghans to join the fight against the British. He asked the Chinese to send them back, but was told that China was neutral and had no reason to exclude them.

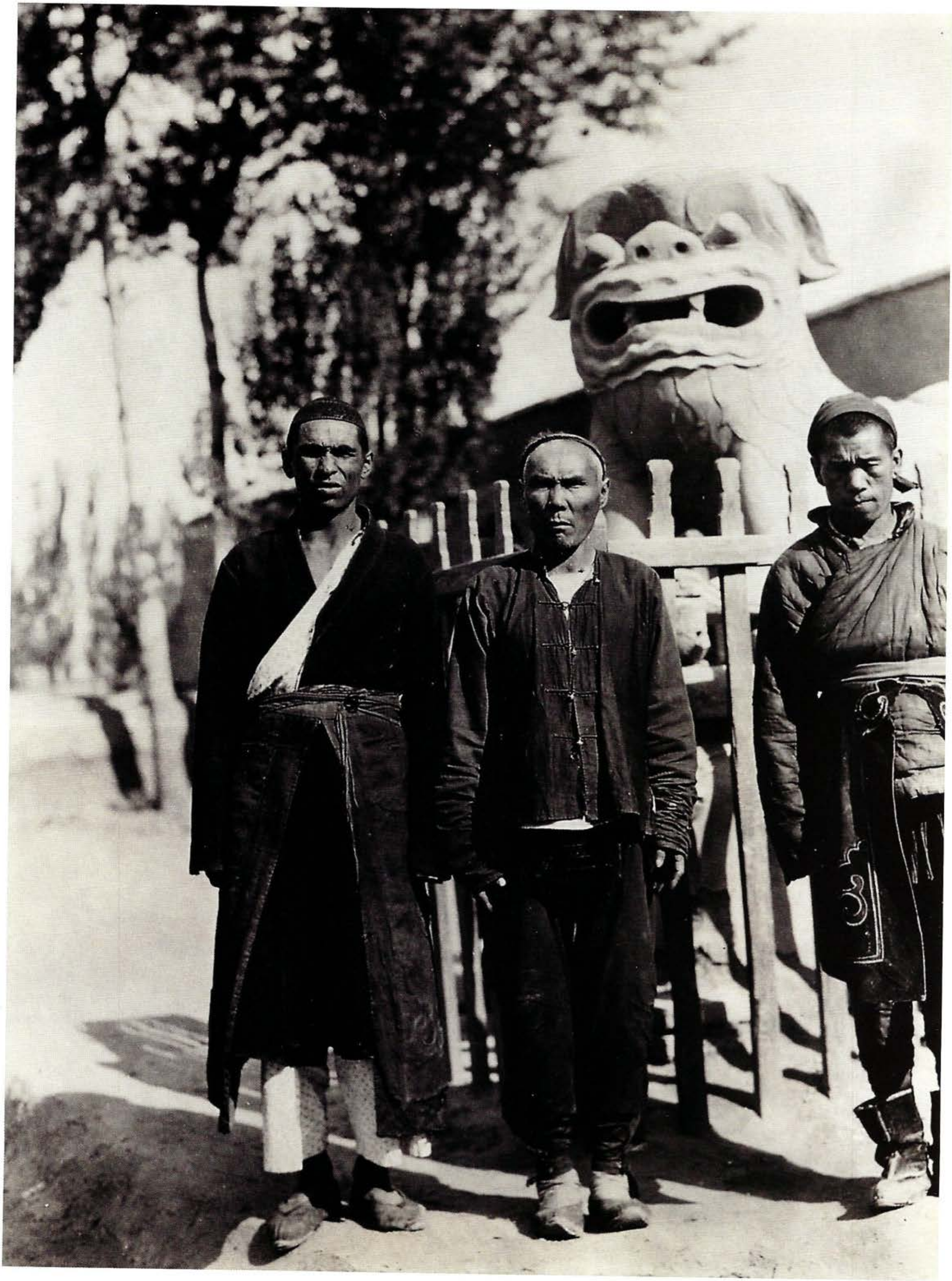
Shortly after his arrival, Sykes was watching another party of Turks heading for Afghanistan. Sykes and the Russian consul, acting together, arranged for the *taoyin*, the local governor, to detain them. In May yet another party of Turks appeared; they were arrested by the Russian Cossacks on the

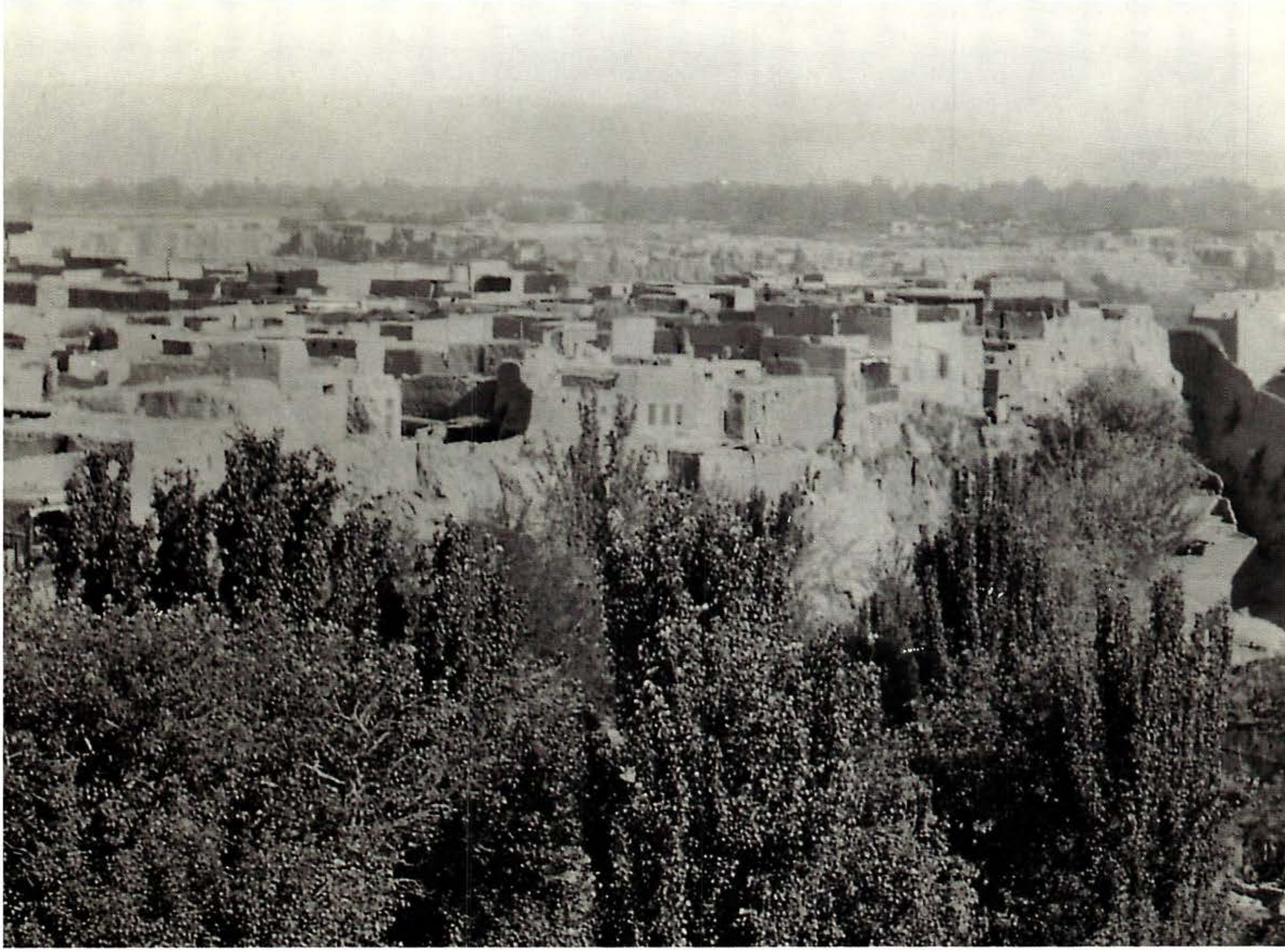


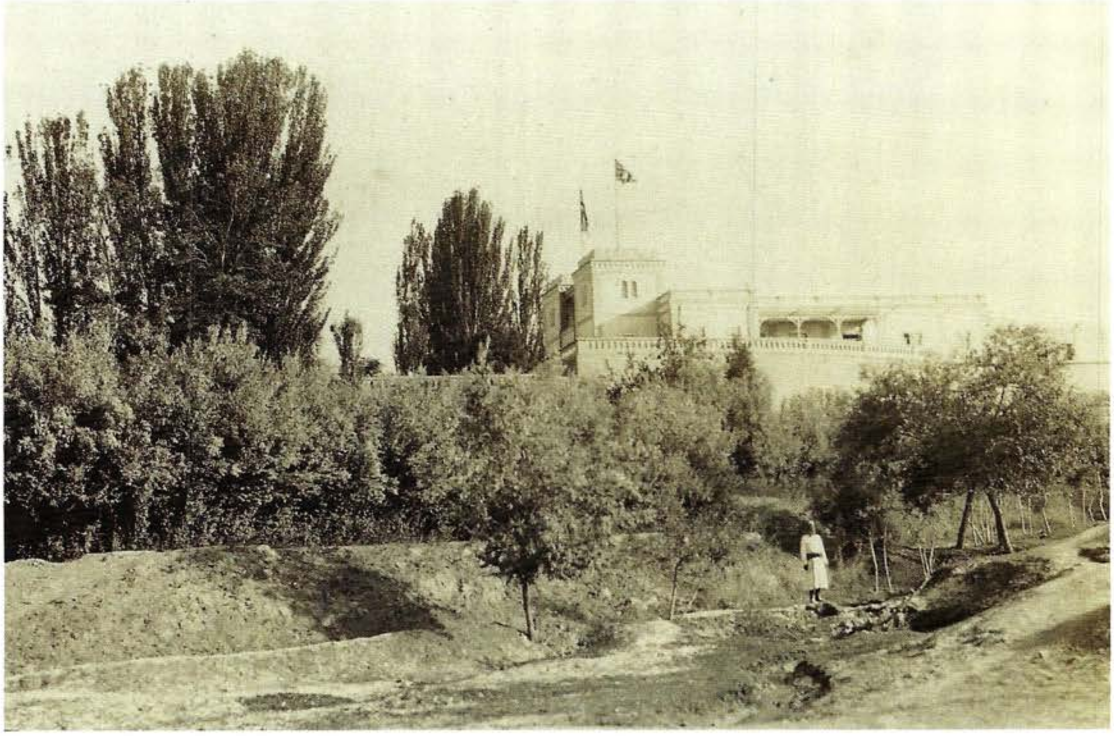
Eastern Turkestan was in turmoil after a republican revolt against the Manchu emperors, hence the military presence in the Taklamakan oases, such as Khotan, seen here. However, it was so remote from Peking that the Russians could send in a thousand Cossacks with impunity. Above: a Tungan general at Khotan. The Tungans were Chinese-speaking Muslims, also known as Hui, who periodically revolted against the Chinese government. Right: Chinese troops on parade at Khotan Opposite: three soldiers pose in front of a Chinese war god

border. Two months later the Turks tried again. This time a number of them came to open a school, but the Kashgar merchants were opposed to the introduction of any new ideas that they could not control and, encouraged by the Russians – or so the Turkish agents claimed – paid the mullahs to denounce the Turks from their pulpits. The points that the mullahs insisted on were that: Ottoman Turkish was not to be taught in the schools; the only subjects to be taught were Arabic and religion; nationalist and ethnic poems were to be deleted from the syllabus; handwriting was not to be taught in the Ottoman but in the Kashgari style; students were to wear turbans and long coats, not European dress; greeting was to be in the form of a loud *Es-selaamun aleykum* and not a salute; history and geography were not to be taught, and schoolbooks should carry no illustrations.

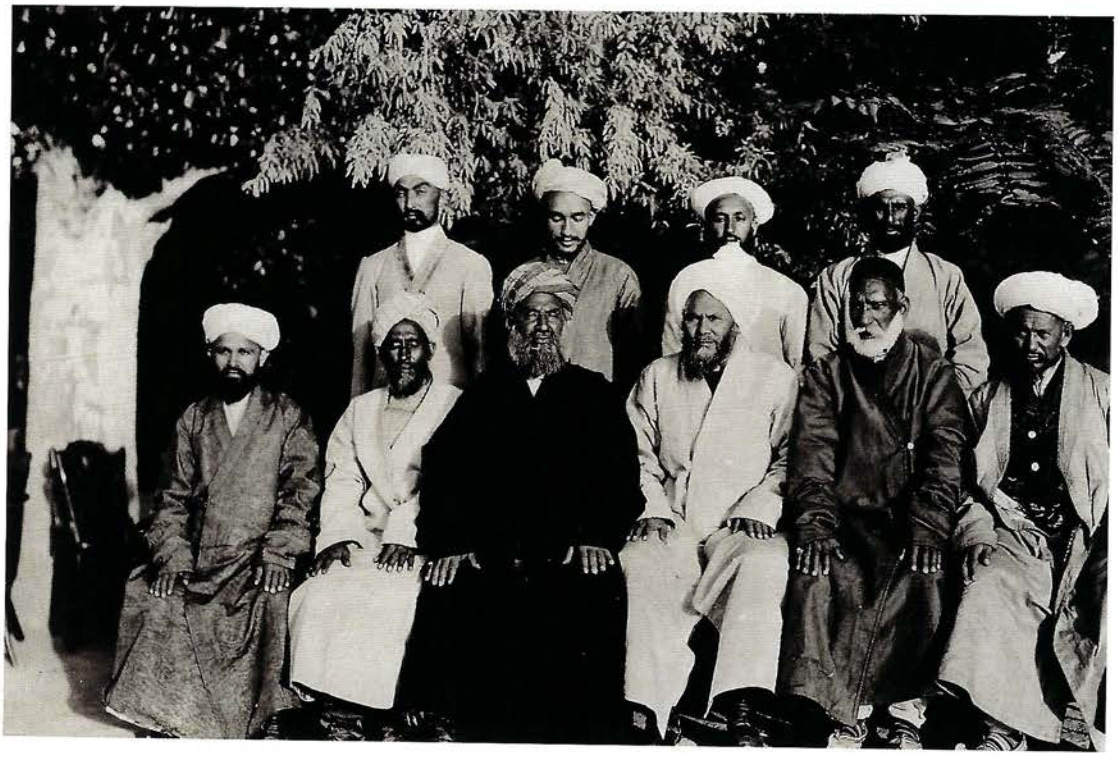
Life in the Kashgar oasis revolved around the peaceable cultivation of raisins and watermelons. Seeking relief from the tedium of life in irrigated country, where it was flat and there was nothing in the way of game for Sykes to shoot or open cultivated space where they could ride out on horses, Sykes and Ella left the oppressive heat of June on an expedition to the Pamir Mountains, the great natural barrier between the eastern part of the Russian empire and British India. Up in those mountains were little-known passes that needed to be mapped for British military intelligence. During his years as consul in Persia, Sykes had seen much of Russian perfidy and disregard for treaties. Russia was allied to Britain now, since both were at war with Germany, but Sykes was not convinced that the Russians had abandoned their project to annex India to their eastward-spreading empire.



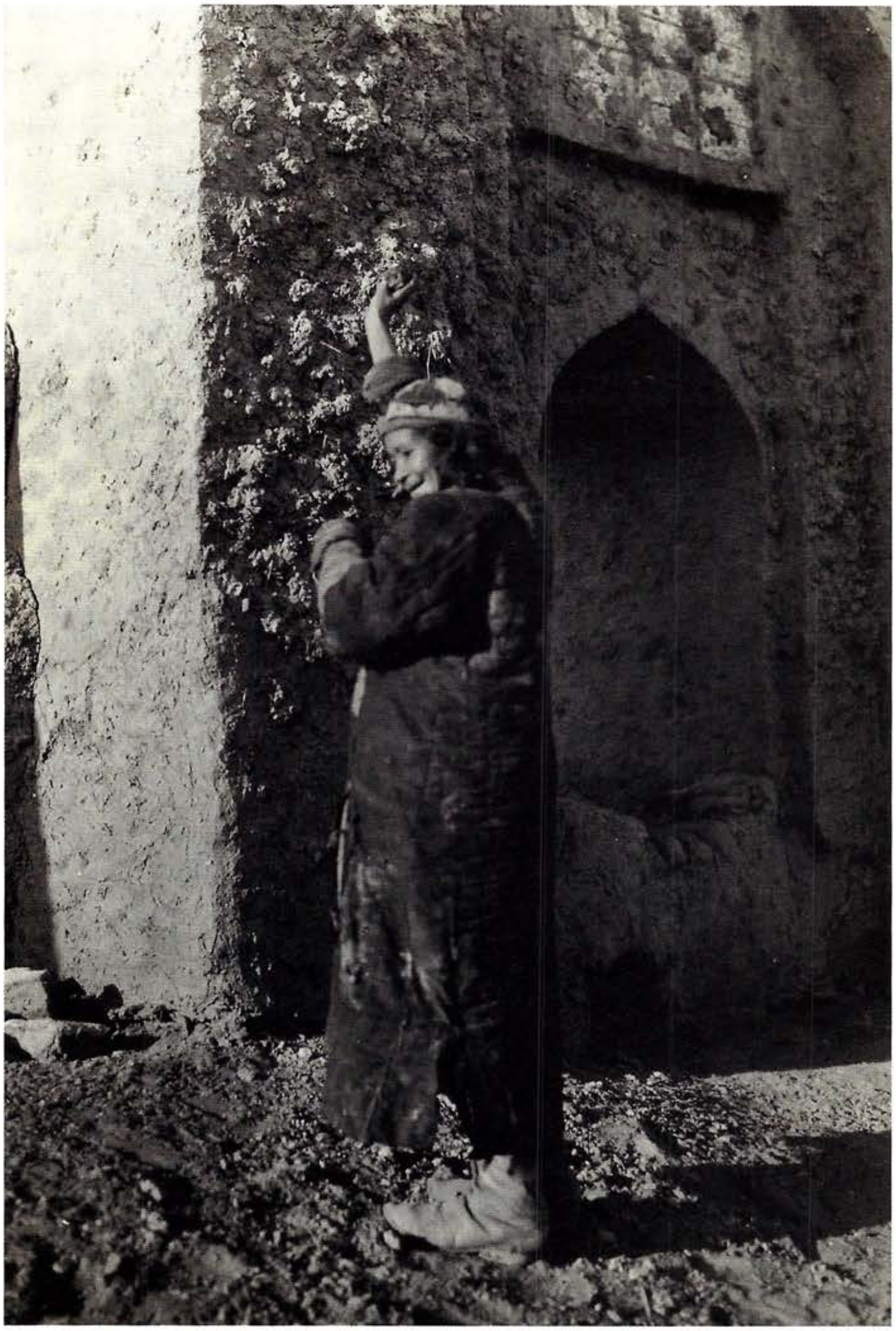




Above: the view over Kashgar from Chini Bagh, Macartney's British consulate. Life in Kashgar, uncomfortably hot in summer, revolved around the peaceable cultivation of raisins and watermelons. Right: Chini Bagh itself would remain the British consulate until the Maoist revolution. It is now a hotel



Left: British 'ak-sakals' (literally white beards). Most of the British agents in Chinese Turkestan were Indian merchants, subject to British law, and visits to them to settle disputes were the perfect excuse for Sykes to get away from the heat of Kashgar. They functioned as honorary consuls in each of the provincial towns and provided news of local affairs to Macartney's consulate



Above left: a woman placing a token in supplication at the shrine of a saint

Above right: the Tian Shan Mountains from the west. Kashgar is on the far side

Left: the glacier of Muztagh Ata – Father of Ice Mountains. The valley floor is at 12,000 feet

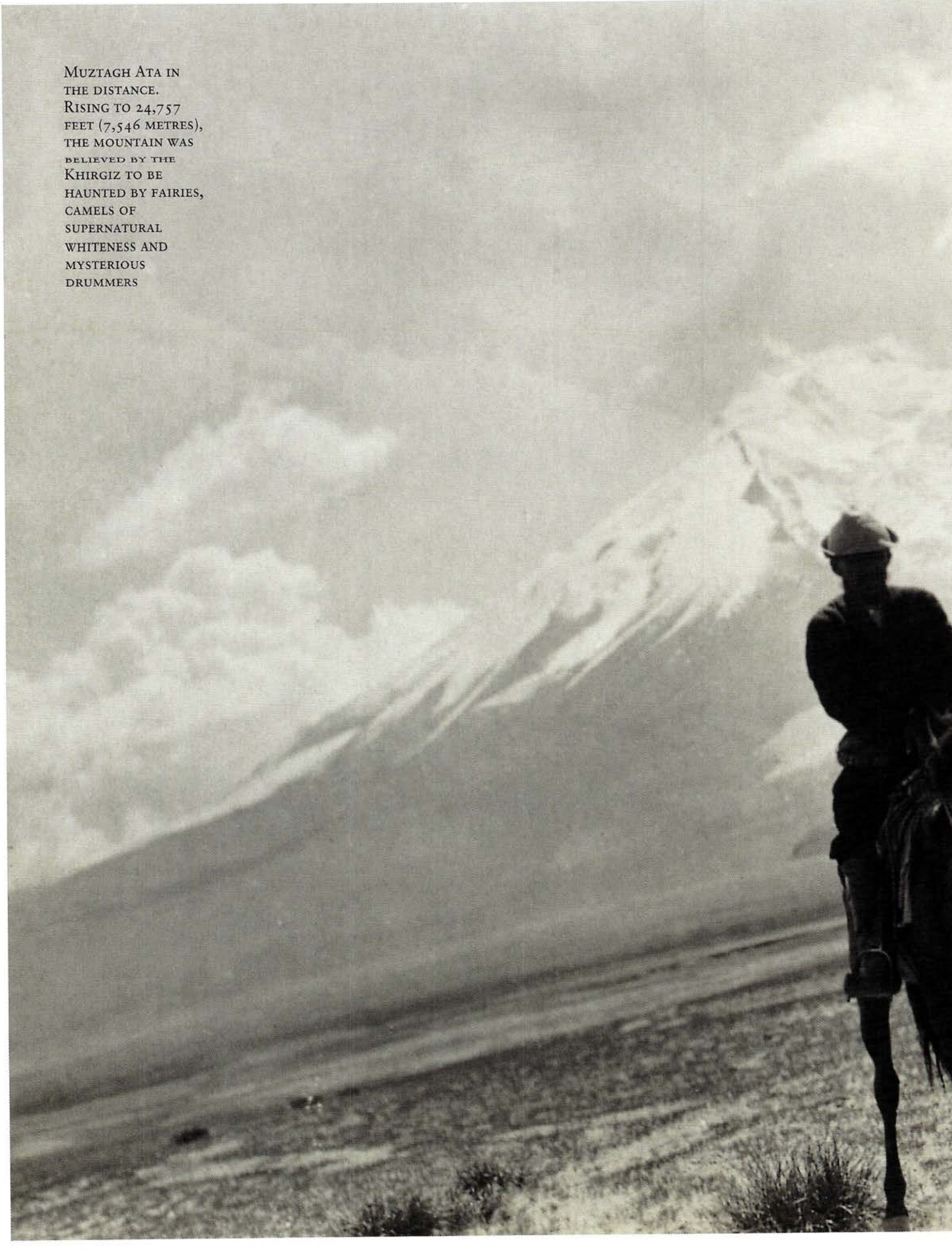
With eighteen pack ponies to carry their supplies, Sir Percy and his sister set off across the fast-flowing Gez river up to Lake Bulangul and the country of the Kirghiz nomads, who welcomed them into their felt *ak-oys* (*ak ev*, or white houses), which were much warmer and more comfortable than their own camping tents. As they climbed, they changed their pack ponies for yaks and reached the 16,000-foot crest of the Katta Dawan Pass, with its spectacular view of the Great Karakul (Black Lake) on the Russian side. They visited Pamirski Post, the Russian military outpost at the head of the Murghab valley, which forms one of the headwaters of the Oxus. Even the bottoms of the valleys were 12,000 feet high – higher than most of the Alps. This was the home of the *Ovis poli*, the Marco Polo sheep, with its huge spreading horns, the most coveted trophy of English sporting soldiers in India.

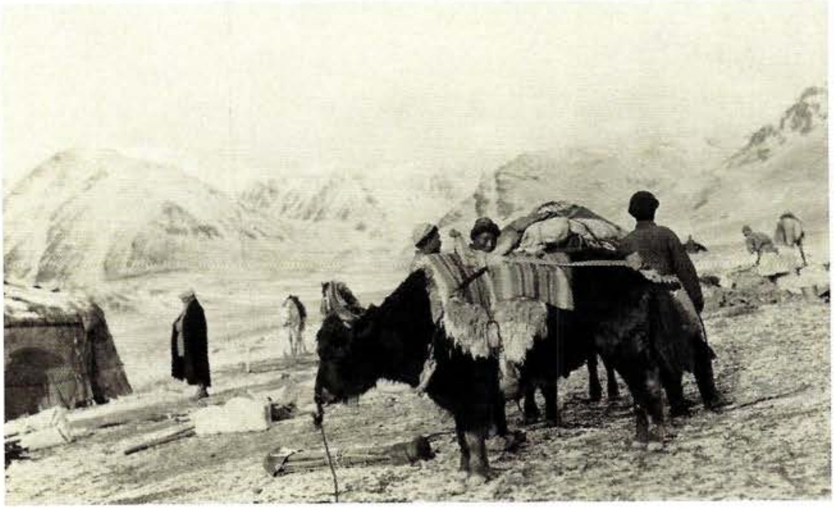
Crossing back into Chinese territory at Tagharma, with its astounding view of Muztagh Ata (Father of Ice Mountains), the Sykeses were treated to a display of *olak tartush*, the Kirghiz equivalent of the Afghan *buzkashi*, a form of mounted rugby with a goat carcass for a ball. The players compete in a free-for-all to pick up the carcass and carry it off round a post in the distance and back to the starting point.

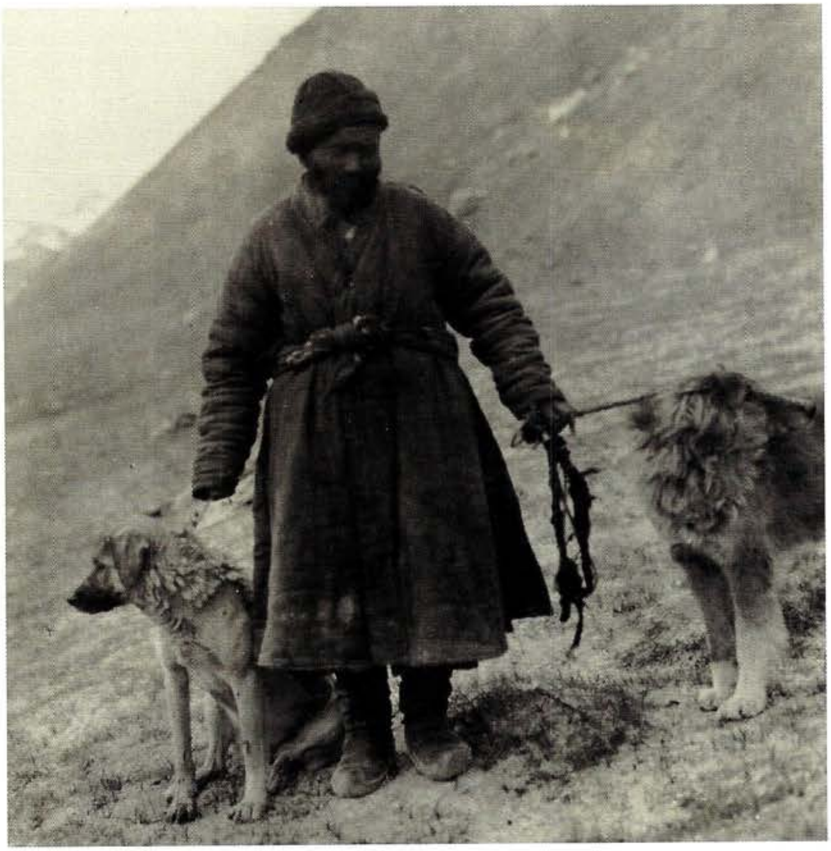
The Sykeses made a detour on the Russian side to the Sarikol valley, populated by Ismaili Muslims, followers of the Aga Khan, who spoke Sogdian, a very ancient form of Persian. The Aga Khan, who lived in India, was a British subject and, by extension, the Sarikol Ismailis considered themselves similarly tied.

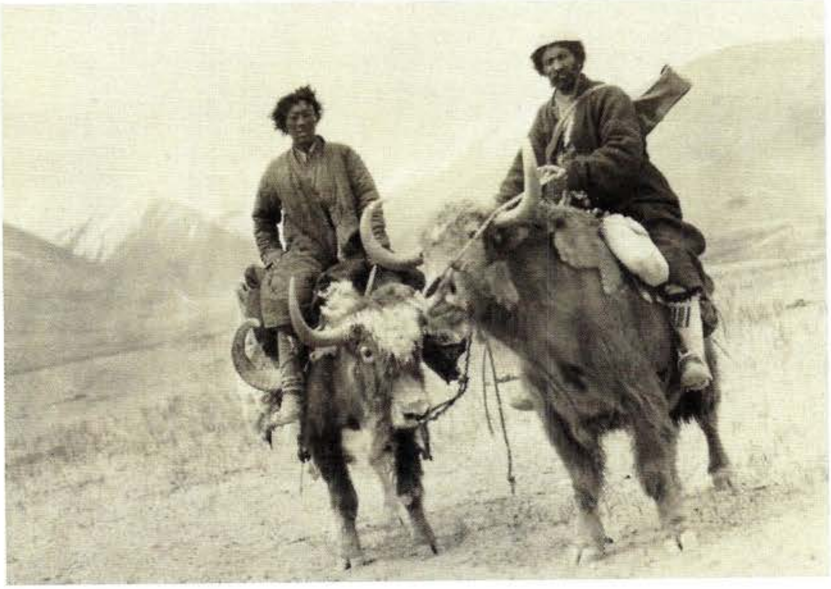
They continued up to the foot of the glacier of Muztagh Ata by yak, led by their Kirghiz guide in his long red leather riding boots, fur cap and padded coat of many colours. Further than this he refused to go, for the Kirghiz believed Muztagh Ata to be haunted by fairies, camels of supernatural whiteness and mysterious drummers (probably the sound of rocks splitting in the cold). The Gez river was by now flooded with snow melt, so they had to return by way of the difficult Ulutagh (Great Mountain) Pass, which was open only in summer and was always dangerous for

Muztagh Ata in the distance. Rising to 24,757 feet (7,546 metres), the mountain was believed by the Khirgiz to be haunted by fairies, camels of supernatural whiteness and mysterious drummers

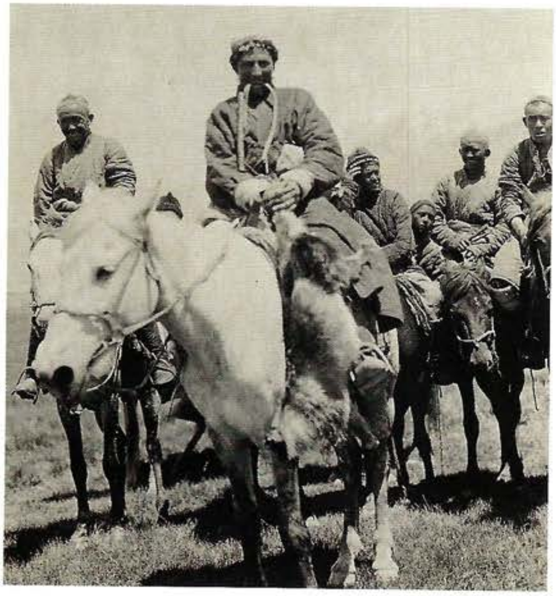




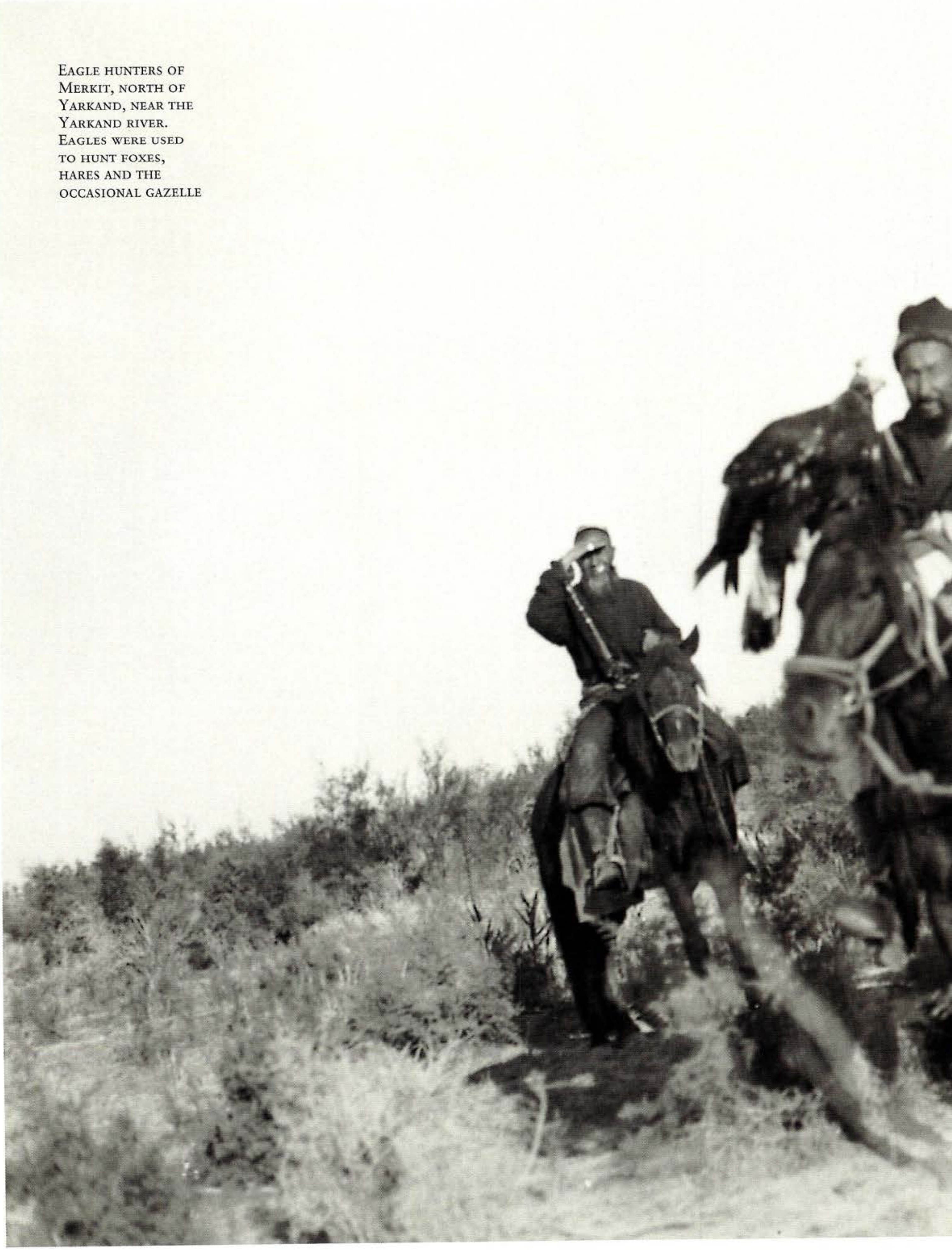


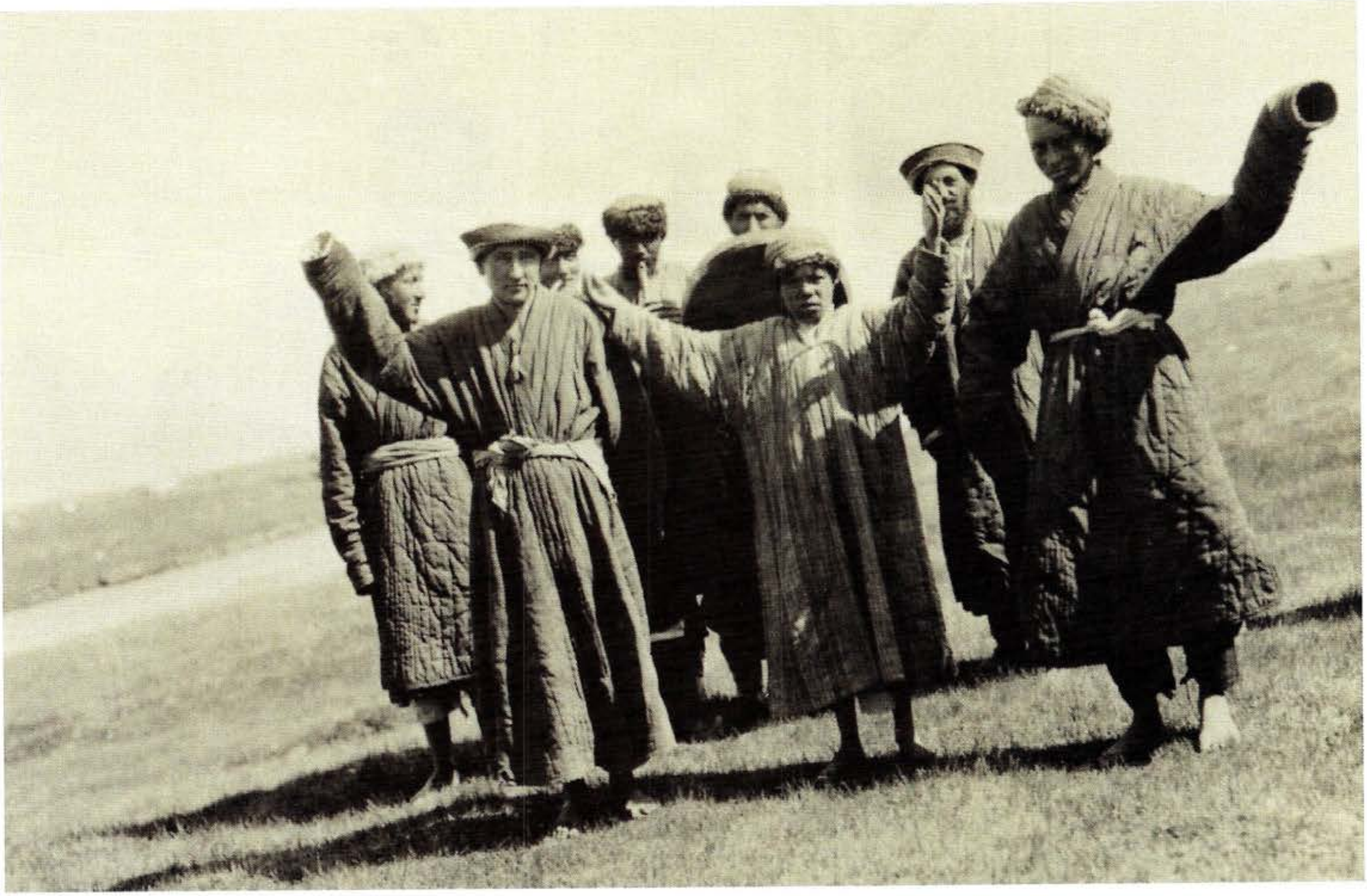


Life in the Pamirs among the hospitable Khirgiz nomads. Above right: Kirghiz women dressed in wedding finery in front of their yurt (or 'ak öy', literally white house in Turkic). Some are wearing ikat dresses. Left from top: loading up the yaks; Pamir hunting dogs; hunters bringing in 'Ovis poli' (Marco Polo sheep) after a stalk. The horns were prized trophies for India Army officers, and a good excuse for spying. Right: 'olak tartush', the Kirghiz version of Afghan 'buzkashi'. Players must pick up a goat carcass stuffed with sand and carry it off round a post some distance away and back to the pickup point, while the other players try to take it off him

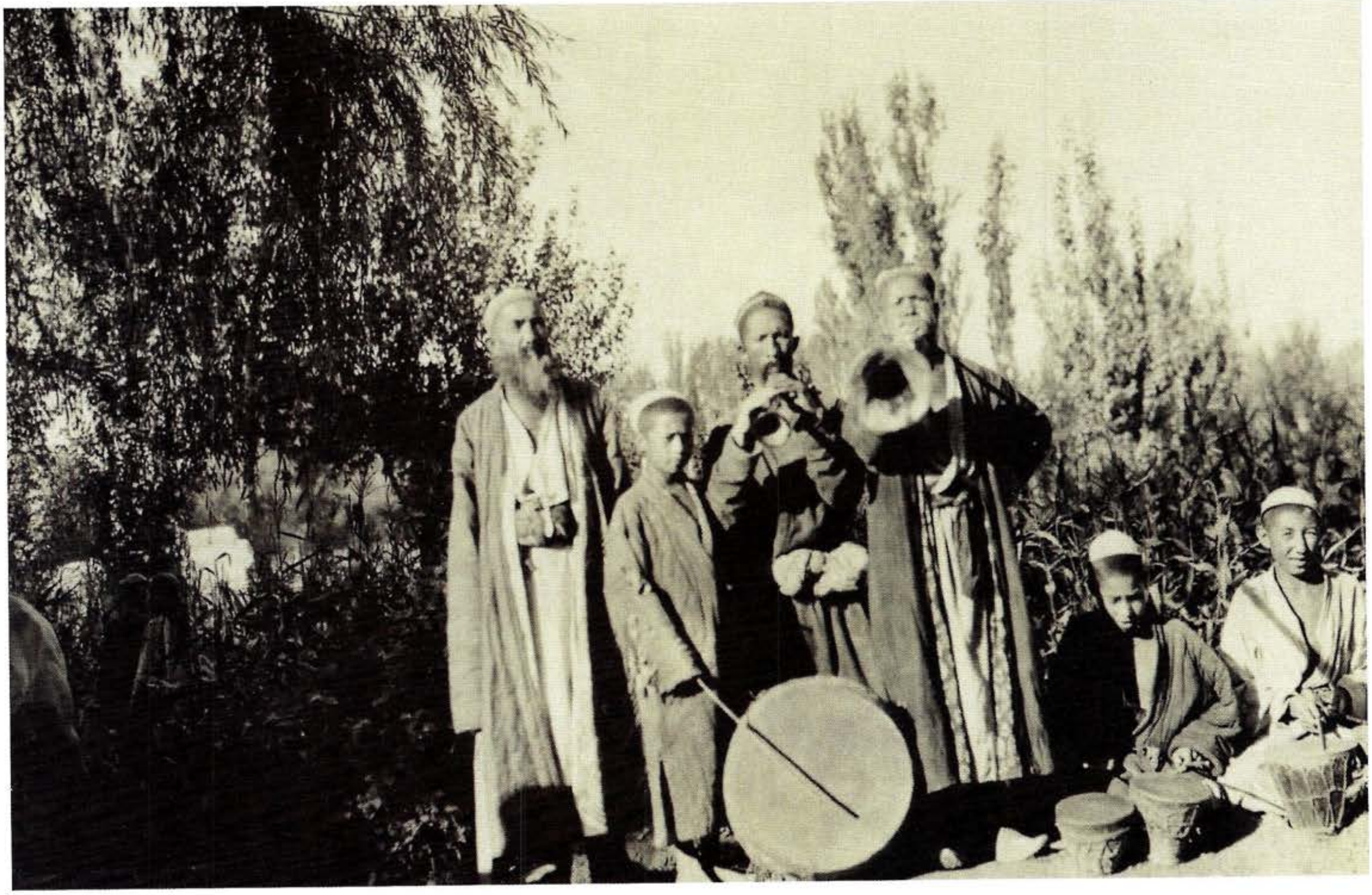


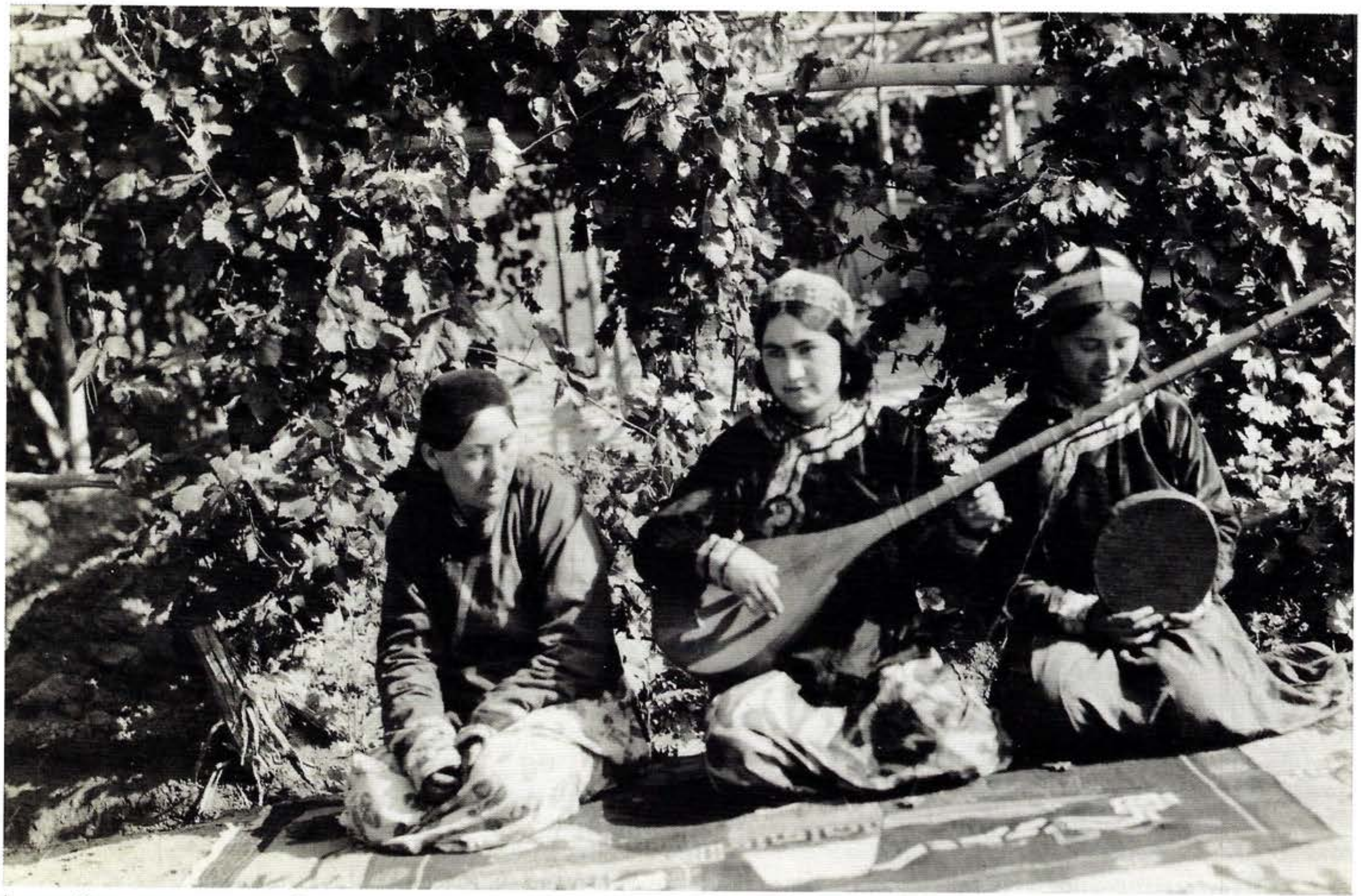
Eagle hunters of Merkit, north of Yarkand, near the Yarkand river. Eagles were used to hunt foxes, hares and the occasional gazelle



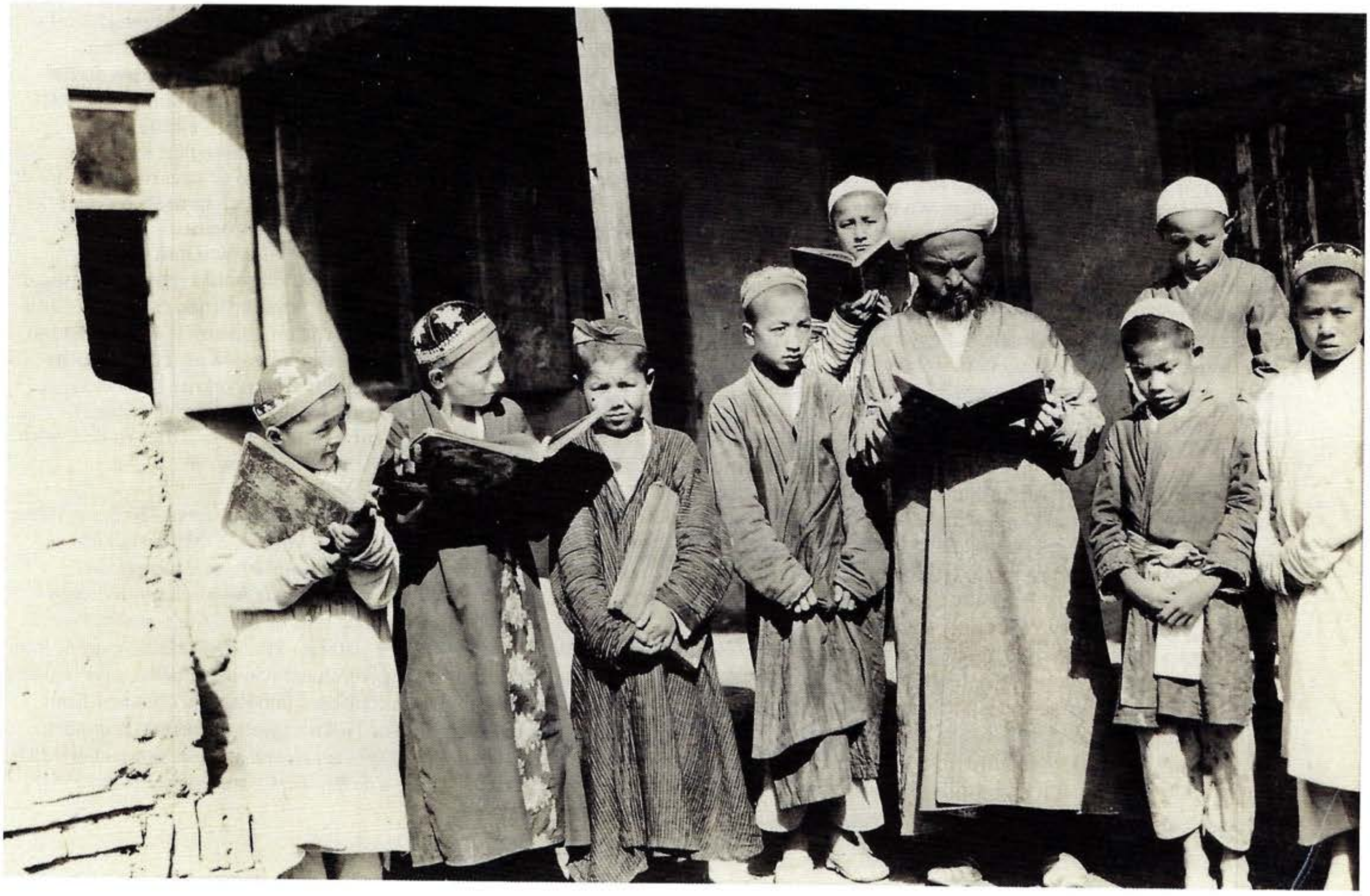


Above: Sarikoli dancers of the Ismaili sect. In Central Asia long empty sleeves indicate that the wearer is not a manual labourer. Below: musicians in Yarkand, the most fertile and prosperous of the oases





Above: Kashgari musicians. There was no objection to women performing in public. Below: a Kashgar school. The syllabus consisted only of Arabic and religion. Turkish attempts to broaden it were thwarted by Russian agents



Above: washing horses in the Gez river. The Sykeses crossed the Gez on their journey into the high Pamirs. Snow melt made it impassable on their return, forcing them to travel over the dangerous Ulutagh Pass by yak

animals. Hanging on to their astoundingly sure-footed yaks for dear life, they slithered over the ice and scree down to the other side. Once on level ground they exchanged their yaks for camels and rode the last thirty miles into the stifling July heat of Kashgar.

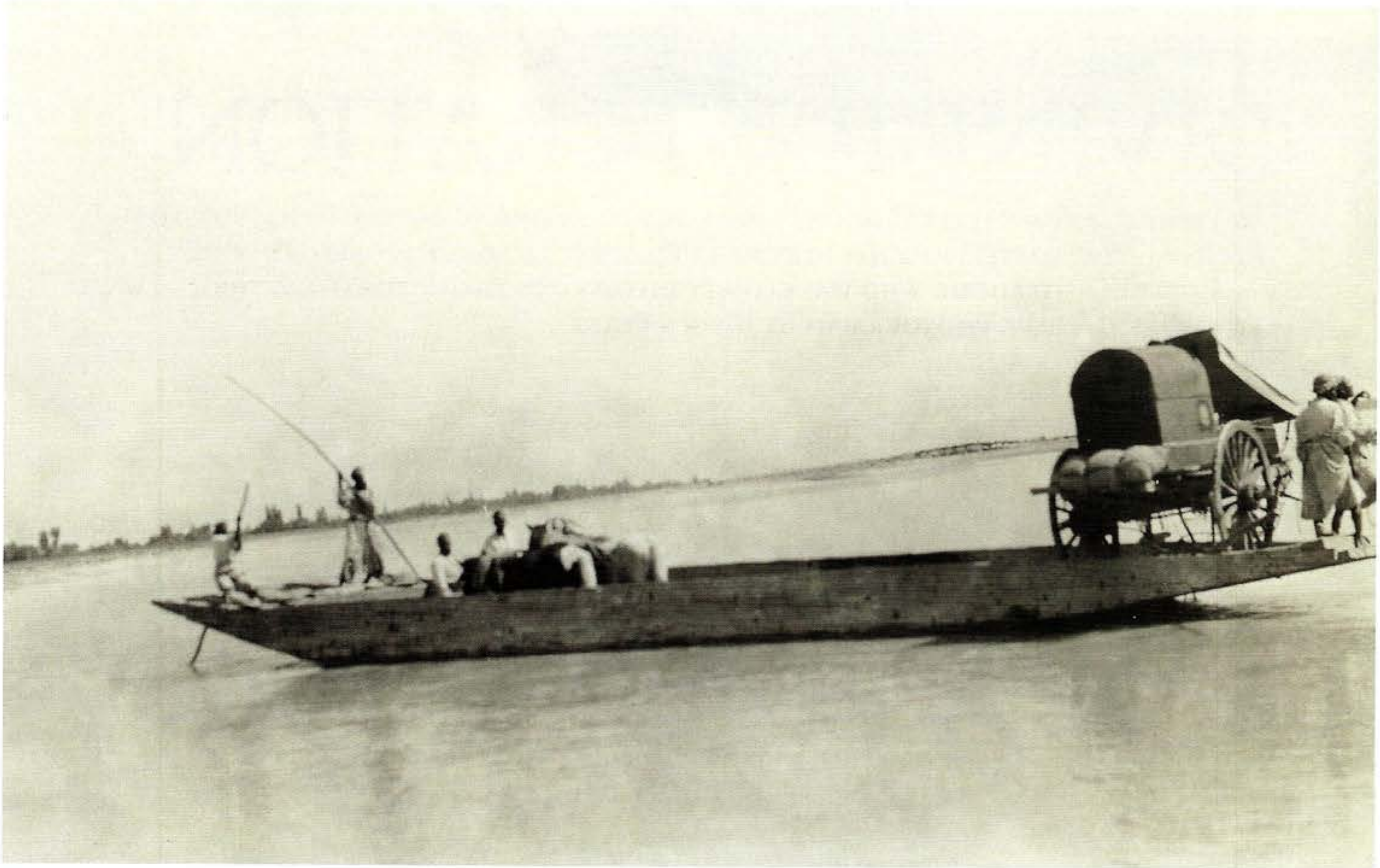
In September they set off once more, this time along the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert to the oasis cities of Yarkand (present-day Sache) and Khotan. They hired high-wheeled wagons to carry their baggage over the heavily rutted roads and, although highway robbery was almost unknown in Eastern Turkestan, various characters attached themselves to their party to enjoy reflected consular glory. Among them were the master of the horse of the Rajah of Punyal and his groom, on a mission to buy Badakhshani horses; the chief falconer to the Mehtar of Chitral, in search of a pair of extremely rare white hawks found only in the district of Sarikol; and a Hindu trader with a wooden leg who saluted Sykes in military fashion whenever occasion offered. There were many British subjects in the southwestern part of Chinese Turkestan, mostly Indian merchants bringing goods over the Himalayas. They brought in English and Indian printed cottons and muslins, spices and Lipton's tea, and exported raw silk and high-quality cannabis. The visit of their consul was welcome and, as Sykes's caravan proceeded, its tail grew longer and longer.

Yarkand they found to be the most fertile and prosperous of the southern oases. The Yarkandis, who did not boil their drinking water, suffered famously from goitre. At each town the Sykeses received the respects of the British *ak sakal* (white beard), usually the senior Indian merchant. There was a network of *ak sakals* across Eastern Turkestan. As well as representing their own little community, they passed news of local goings-on back to the British consulate in Kashgar. There was nothing underhand about this arrangement, of which the Chinese were perfectly well aware. Under Chinese capitulations the Indians were subject to British law and it was the consul's duty to settle their disputes with the Chinese authorities.

To reach Khotan the Sykeses had to ferry the horses across the wide Yarkand river, which carried melting summer snow-water northwards to disappear in the desert. Khotan was famous for its jade and silk. It was from here that in 550AD silkworm eggs had been stolen and taken to Byzantium to break the Chinese monopoly on the trade. In each of these towns Sykes had to visit the local governor and, with the British *ak sakal*, settle all the Indians' disputes, some of which had been outstanding for years, before he and Ella could return to Kashgar.

In November 1915 the Macartneys returned from leave and Ella and her brother set off on the long journey home through Russia to England and back to the Great War. Four months later Sykes was to land at Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf with a handful of British army officers and Indian warrant officers to raise the regiment of South Persia Rifles to deal with the German infiltration of southern Persia. ◆

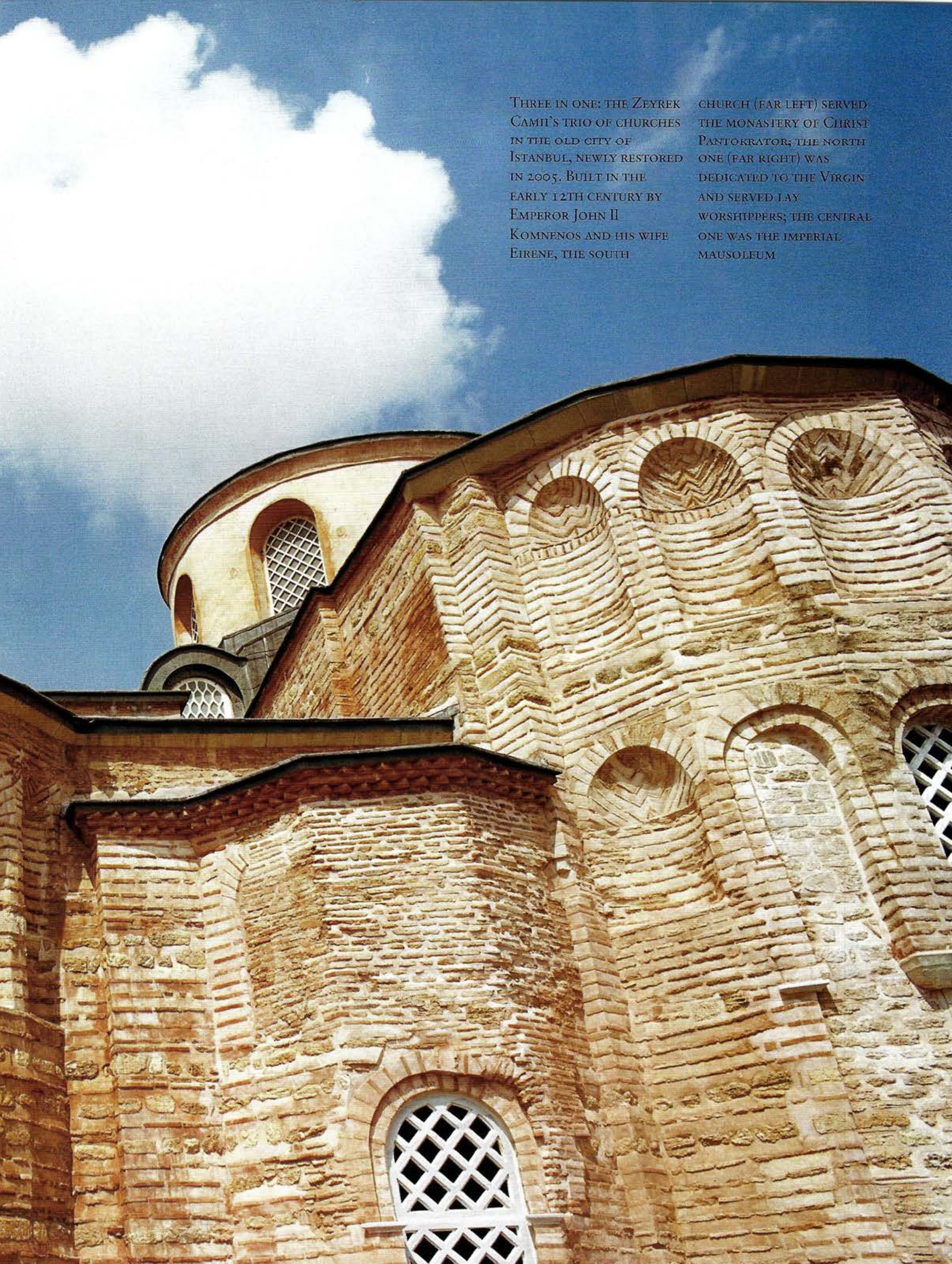
Antony Wynn's biography, *Persia in the Great Game – Sir Percy Sykes: Explorer, Consul, Soldier, Spy* (John Murray, 2003), is available in paperback, post-free to subscribers, from www.cornucopia.net.
Also recommended: *Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia* by PM Sykes and Ella Sykes (London, 1920); *The Great Game* by Peter Hopkirk; *Wild West China* by Christian Tyler (both available online from Cornucopia). Cornucopia 31 featured a 36-page article on the Uighurs. Two Turkish memoirs, not translated into English, offer first-hand accounts of the adventures of Turkish agents in Eastern Turkestan: Ahmet Kemal Ilkkul's *Çin Türkistan Hatıraları* (Ötüken, Istanbul, 1997), and Adil Hikmet Bey's *Asya'da Beş Türk* (Ötüken, Istanbul, 1998).



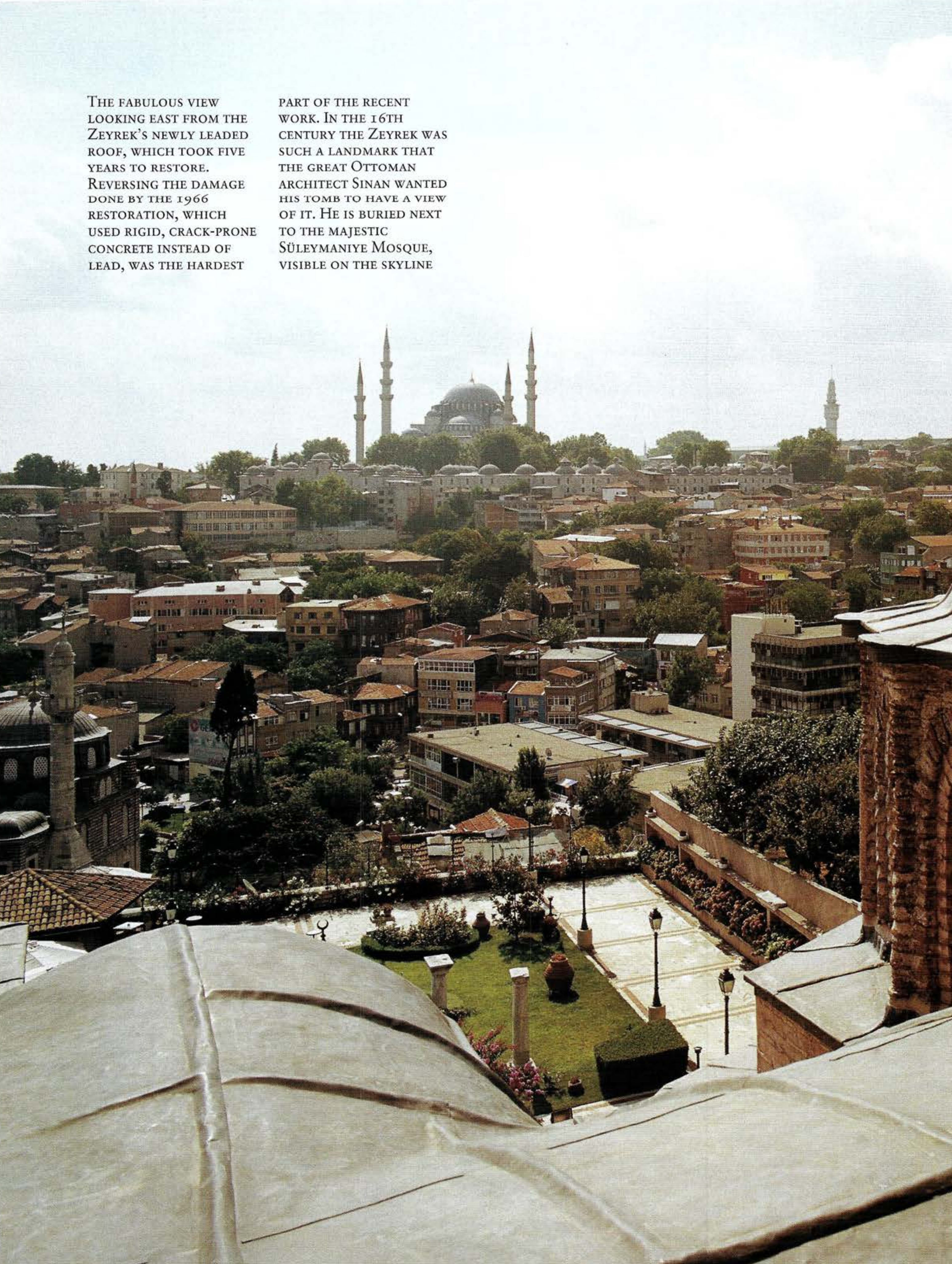
ABOVE: THE FERRY ACROSS THE YARKAND WHICH, LIKE THE GEZ, FLOWS INTO THE TAKLAMAKAN DESERT, WHERE IT VANISHES INTO THE SANDS. BELOW: THE KHOTAN OASIS ON THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE DESERT WAS FAMOUS FOR ITS SILK AND JADE

DIVINE RESTORATION

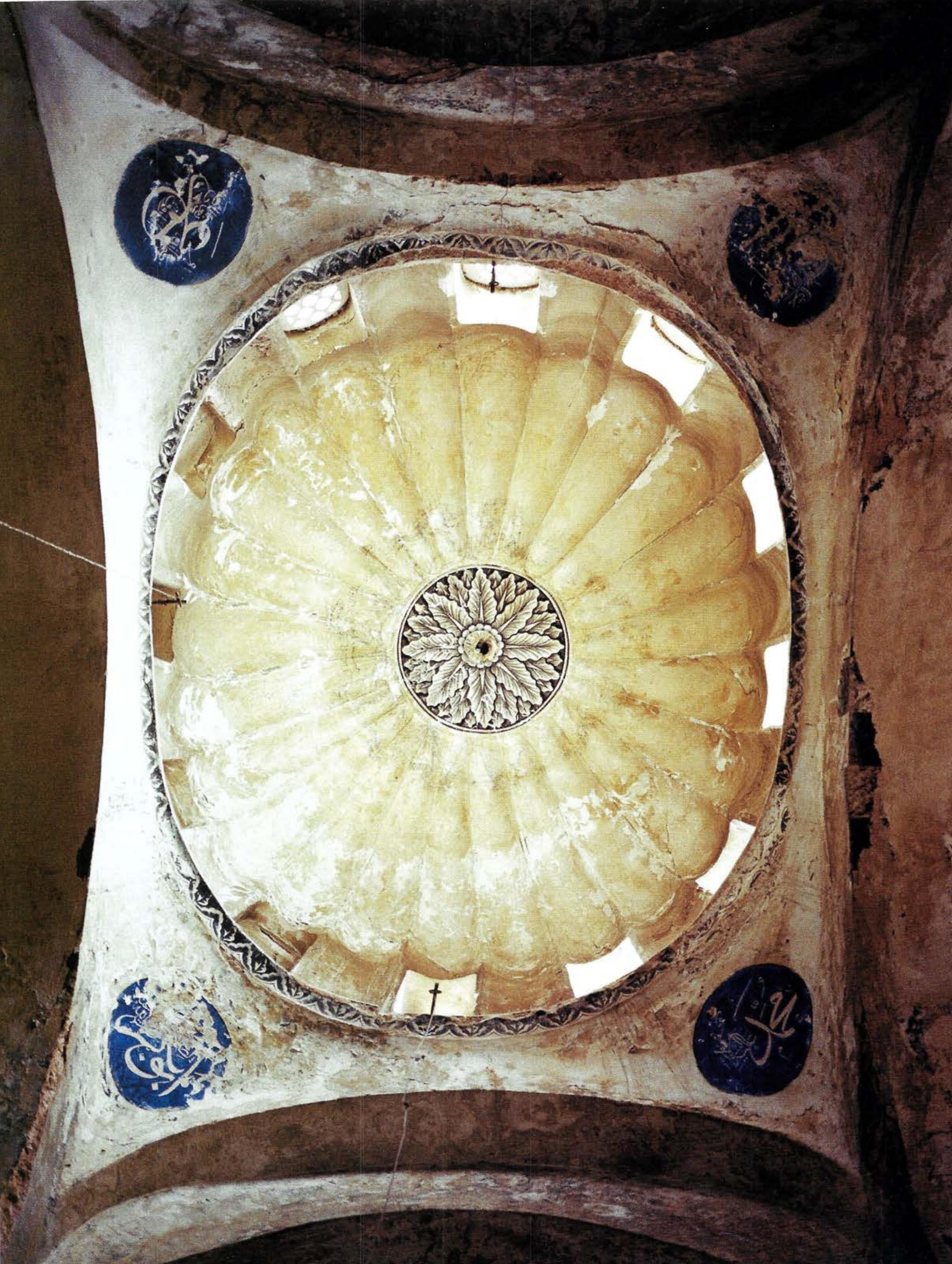
TEN YEARS AGO THE ZEYREK CAMII WAS IN A STATE OF ALARMING DECREPITUDE. NOW THAT THIS BYZANTINE MASTERPIECE HAS BEEN RESCUED, WHAT LESSONS HAVE BEEN LEARNT? FOR ROBERT OUSTERHOUT, WHO WAS CLOSELY INVOLVED IN THE RESTORATION, THE OLD WAYS ARE ALWAYS THE BEST. PHOTOGRAPHS BY JÜRGEN FRANK



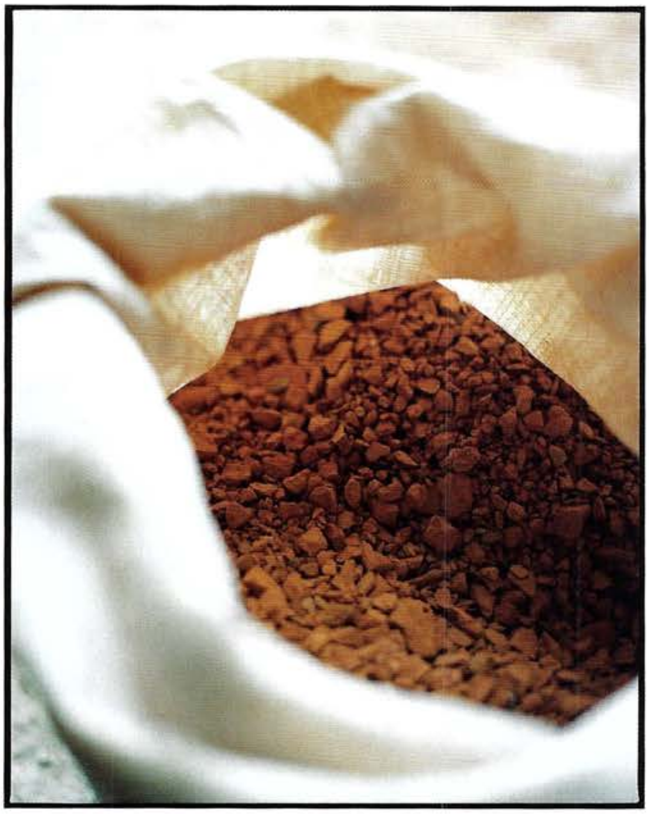
Three in one: the Zeyrek Camii's trio of churches in the old city of Istanbul, newly restored in 2005. Built in the early 12th century by Emperor John II Komnenos and his wife Eirene, the south church (far left) served the monastery of Christ Pantokrator; the north one (far right) was dedicated to the Virgin and served lay worshippers; the central one was the imperial mausoleum

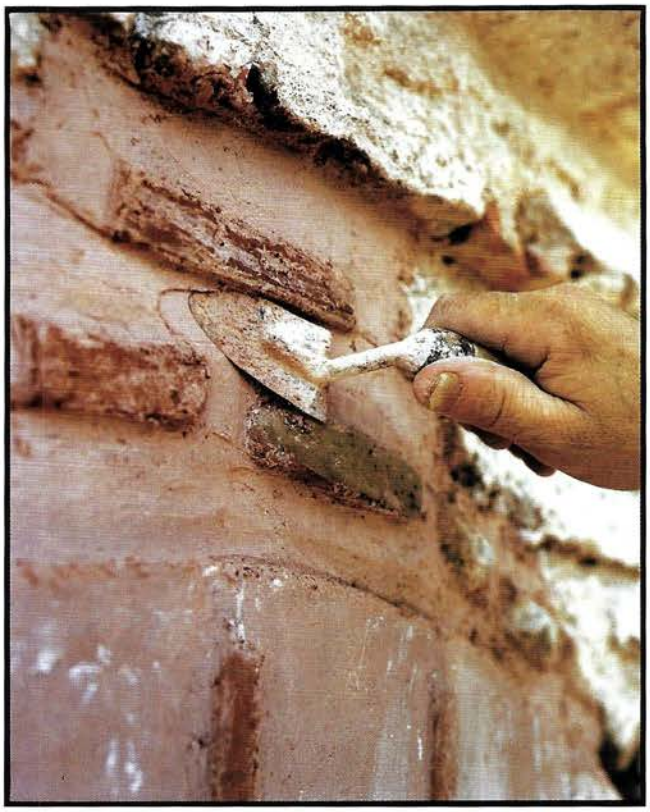


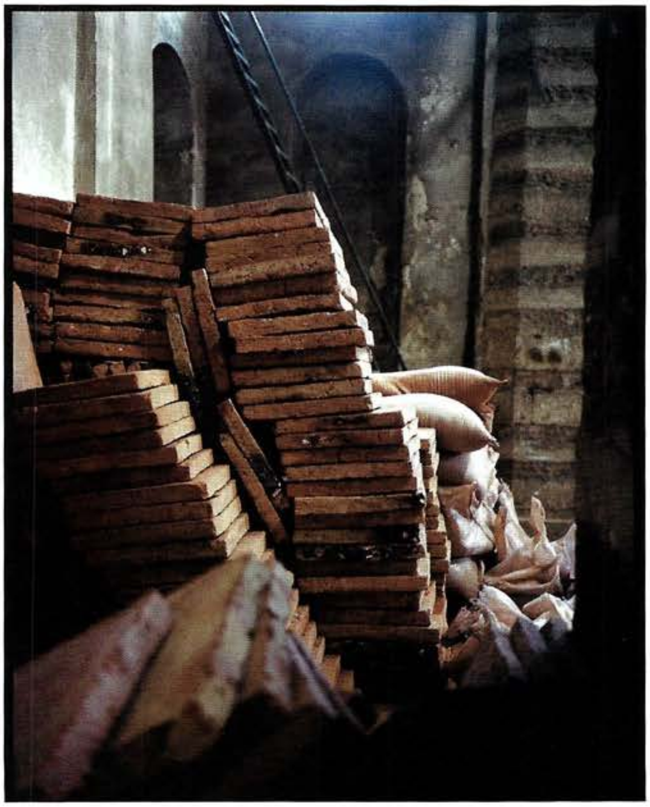
The fabulous view looking east from the Zeyrek's newly leaded roof, which took five years to restore. Reversing the damage done by the 1966 restoration, which used rigid, crack-prone concrete instead of lead, was the hardest part of the recent work. In the 16th century the Zeyrek was such a landmark that the great Ottoman architect Sinan wanted his tomb to have a view of it. He is buried next to the majestic Süleymaniye Mosque, visible on the skyline



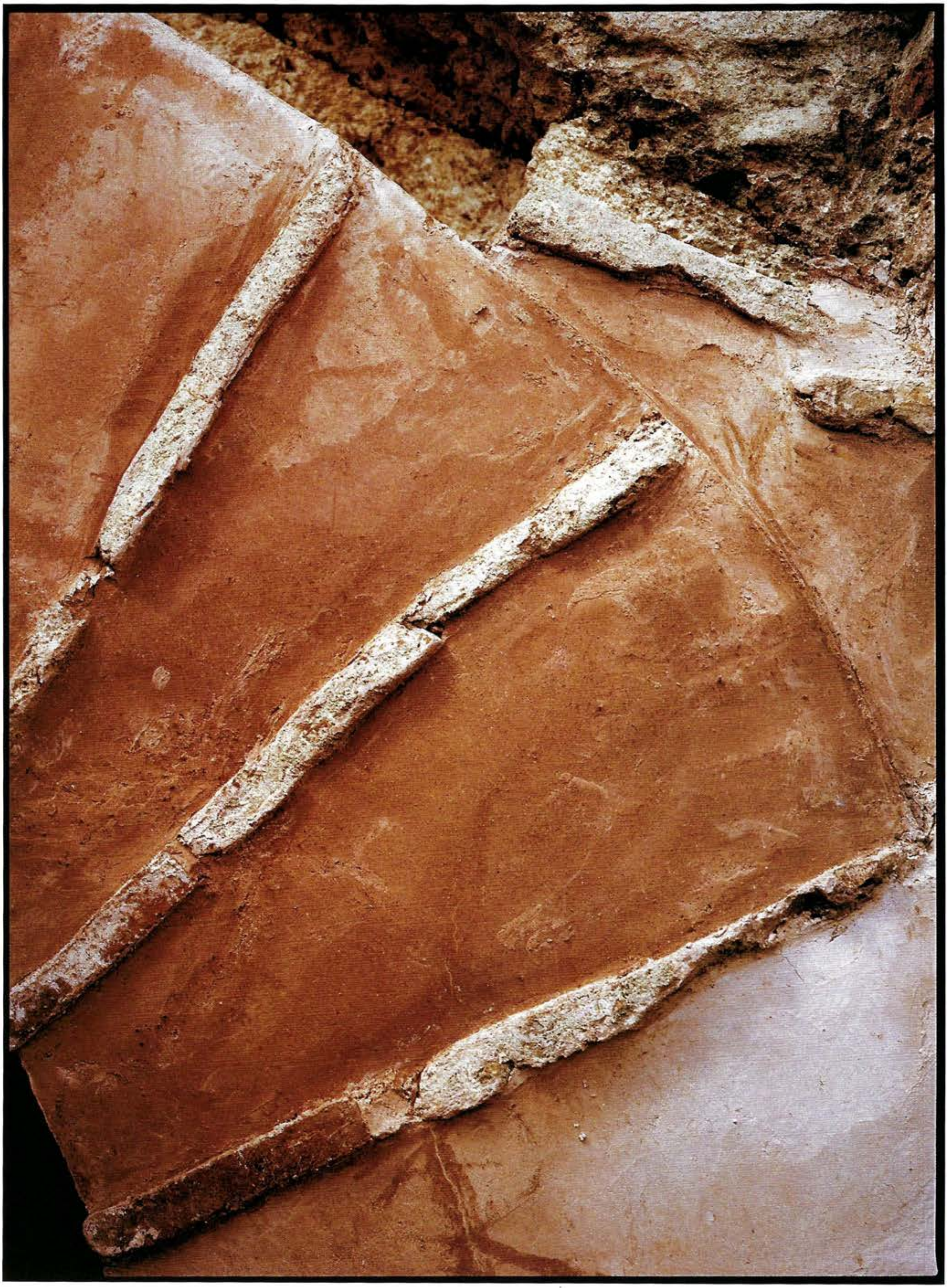
High standards: Professor Zeynep Ahunbay, the architect who oversaw the meticulous restoration with her husband, Metin. They recorded every brick and stone and worked closely with the craftsmen.
Opposite: because the original construction was piecemeal, the building is Byzantine in its complexity.
This fluted oval dome in the mausoleum building was a 12th-century afterthought. The Islamic calligraphy in the corners dates from the 19th century

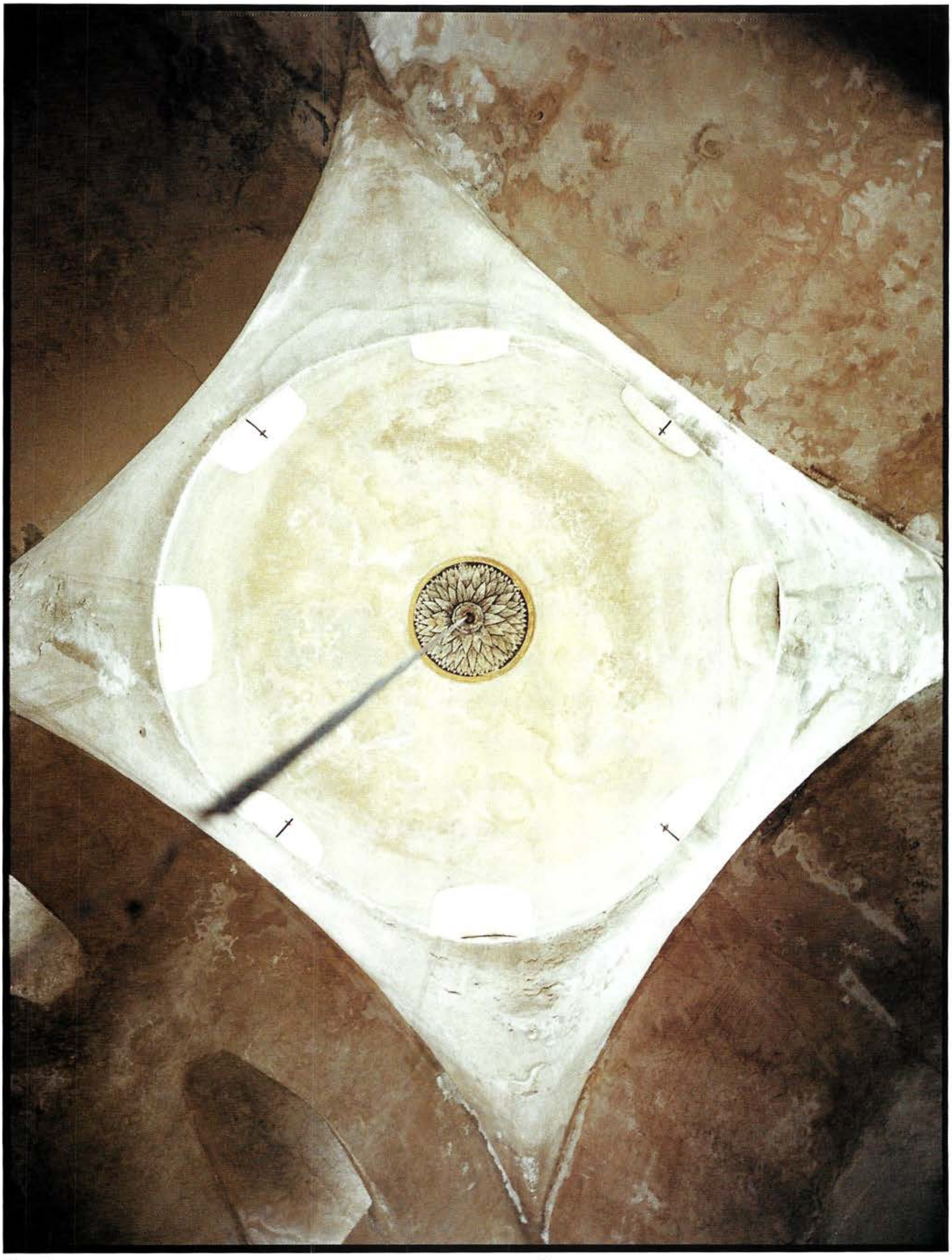




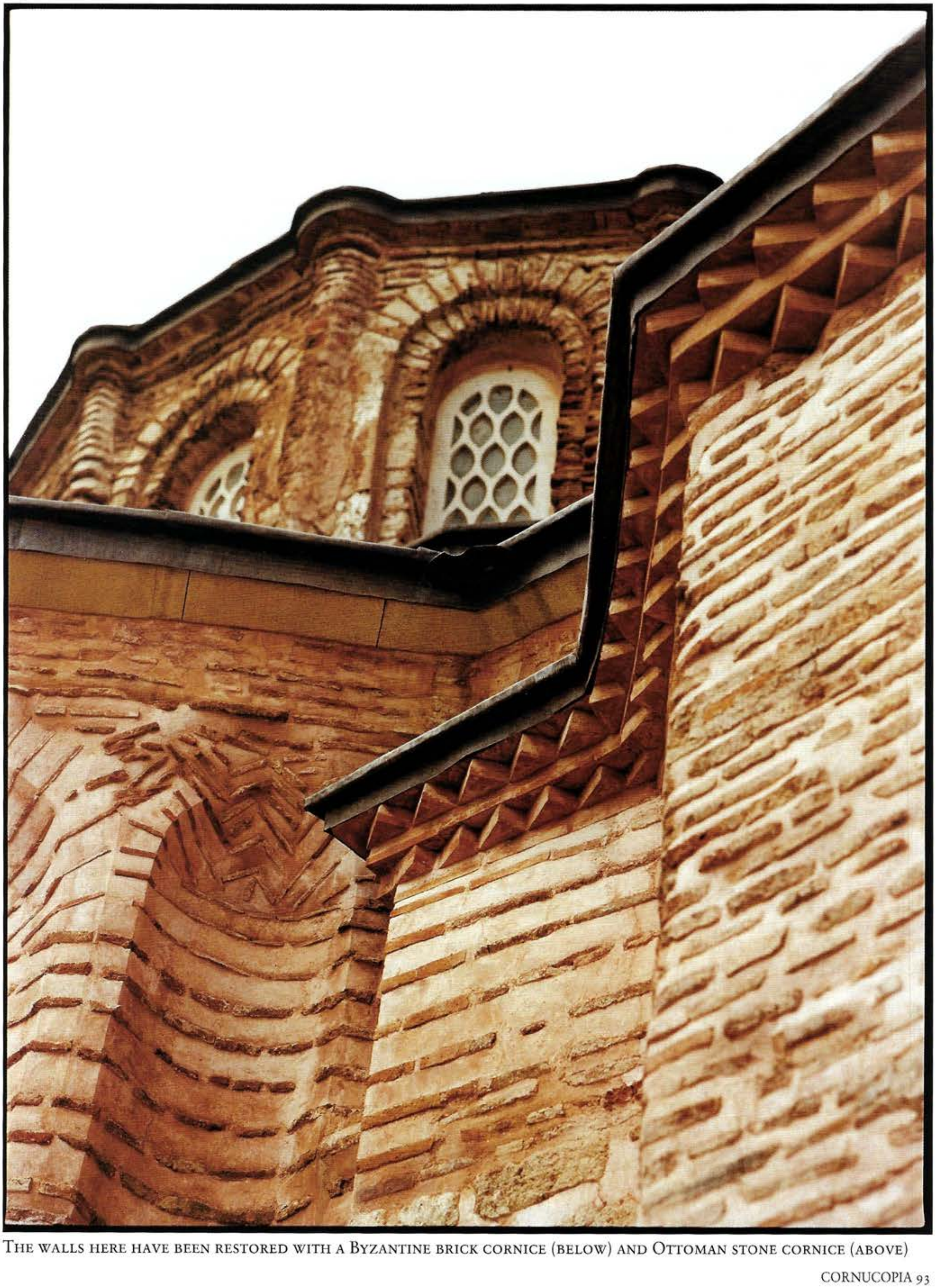


TOP ROW: CRUSHED BRICK GIVES BYZANTINE MORTAR ITS CHARACTERISTIC PINK COLOUR; THE HAND OF THE MASTER MASON AT WORK REPAIRING A WALL. BOTTOM ROW: AN ODD INTERSECTION OF ARCHES, PARTIALLY RESTORED, TESTIFIES TO THE ZEYREK'S HAPHAZARD CONSTRUCTION; AUTHENTIC BRICKS WEIGHING A MAMMOTH 10 KILOS EACH WERE SPECIALLY MADE IN MERZIFON, IN NORTHERN ANATOLIA. OPPOSITE: A REPOINTED ARCH REPLICATES THE THIN BRICKS AND WIDE MORTAR BEDS OF THE ORIGINAL. LABORATORY ANALYSIS WAS NEEDED TO ARRIVE AT THE RECIPE FOR LIME MORTAR





THE ZEYREK HAD BEEN A MOSQUE FOR 400 YEARS WHEN THIS SEVERE, UN-BYZANTINE DOME WAS ADDED IN THE 19TH CENTURY



The walls here have been restored with a Byzantine brick cornice (below) and Ottoman stone cornice (above)

THE RESTORATION OF 1966 REPLACED THE LEAD SHEETING WITH A FAUX-LEAD ROOF OF REINFORCED CONCRETE. NOT SURPRISINGLY, IT CRACKED AND LEAKED AND CAUSED A GREAT DEAL OF DAMAGE

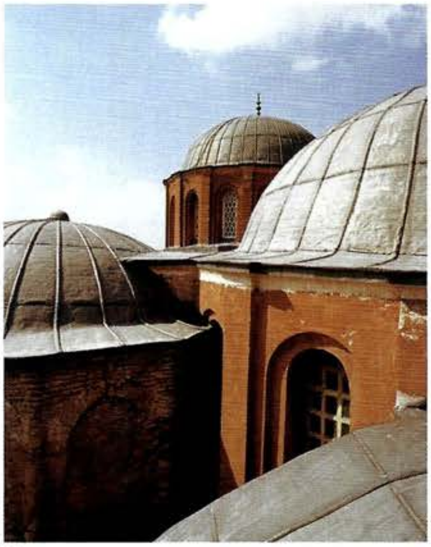
If, as the saying goes, God is in the detail, then historic preservation is a divine occupation. It follows that the best practitioners approach their work with a missionary zeal. As with any religion, there is the right way, or no way at all. Compromise and haste, usually products of a treacherous conspiracy involving politicians and contractors, are the cardinal sins of historic preservation, which can threaten the very soul of the monument in question. Working on the restoration of the Zeyrek Camii in Istanbul over the past decade has made me a convert.

I have spent much of the past five years on the roof of the Zeyrek Camii. It was a mess, but the view was fabulous. To the east, the panorama spans from the Aqueduct of Valens to the Süleymaniye Camii, to the Golden Horn and Galata. To the west, the view is dominated by the Fatih Camii and the Selimiye Camii. Closer at hand are the remains of a dilapidated neighbourhood of wooden houses and the foundations of an Ottoman *konak* now converted to an upscale restaurant. It was easy to get lost in the view and forget that beneath one's feet was one of the most significant and threatened monuments of the city's history.

Originally the core of the famed Monastery of Christ Pantokrator (Judge-of-All), the Zeyrek Camii is the largest and most significant monument in the city to survive from the Middle Byzantine period. Built between 1118 and 1136 by John II and Eirene Komnenos as three large, connected churches, the complex served as an important site of Christian veneration and as an imperial mausoleum, housing more than a dozen tombs of the rulers of an empire. The Pantokrator also played a key role during the Latin Occupation (1204–61), when it was the headquarters of the Venetians, and during the Ottoman transformation of the city following the conquest in 1453, when it was converted into a mosque at the time of Mehmet the Conqueror.

Damaged by earthquakes and fires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and sadly neglected in the twentieth, the Zeyrek Camii nevertheless retained its striking appearance: three great buildings side by side, topped by undulating vaults and five distinctive domes, with an irregular row of apses along its east façade, all decorated with niches and intricate brickwork. Stylistically the building marks a critical point in the development of Byzantine architecture as it shifts away from monumentality towards complexity.

That last sentence is the architectural historian speaking. Architectural history today is all about ideas. Certainly ideas are more engaging than crumbling remains, and modern theorists are often too bored with actual bricks and mortar to get their hands dirty or even to read a technical report. As my colleague Henry Maguire puts it, "While the theorists are deconstructing their discourses, time and the elements are deconstructing the monuments." This is particularly true in an area of rapid development such as Istanbul. As an architectural historian, I am a firm believer in give and take: that is, we take from the monuments in the act of interpreting, but we also owe them something in return – documentation, conservation, and restoration – so that they may be passed on to the next generation. This basic belief has guided my own architectural studies, which in the course of twenty-five years have moved progressively from interpretation to site documentation and archaeology, to historic preservation. This belief led me to the Zeyrek Camii, a building of foremost historical importance and absolute decrepitude. It also led me to Zeynep and Metin Ahunbay, both professors of architecture at Istanbul Technical University.



THE UNDULATING DOMES AND VAULTS, ONCE AGAIN SHEATHED IN LEAD, WITH FOLDED AND HAMMERED JOINTS

Zeynep and Metin are "detail people". For those of us who believe in historic preservation, they are the equivalent of gurus. Observing them in practice, as I have in our collaboration over the past decade, is like watching the sacred mysteries unfold: certain rituals must be observed. For example, a good project begins with documentation, including stone-by-stone measured drawings to record the state of the building prior to intervention. The Ahunbays have set high standards. As they insist, recording is better done by human beings than by machines, for the close analysis of the fabric is critical in understanding the state of the building. The old-fashioned approach means that the recorder actually has to understand what he or she is looking at. Photogrammetry or laser scanners may be used to control the final drawings but can never replace the human element.

As basic as this might sound, it is a practice seldom observed. These days, a typical historic preservation project by an architectural office in Istanbul will have one firm contracted to prepare the documentation, another to prepare a restoration proposal, and a third to do the work (the last hired on the basis of the lowest bid submitted), with the architect "overseeing" the project not directly involved at any stage. Moreover, it is increasingly rare for a restoration project to engage historians or archaeologists: they simply slow things down and increase operating costs. Knowledgeable eyes, involved in every step of the work, are the most critical element to any restoration – and the first thing to be eliminated to expedite a project.

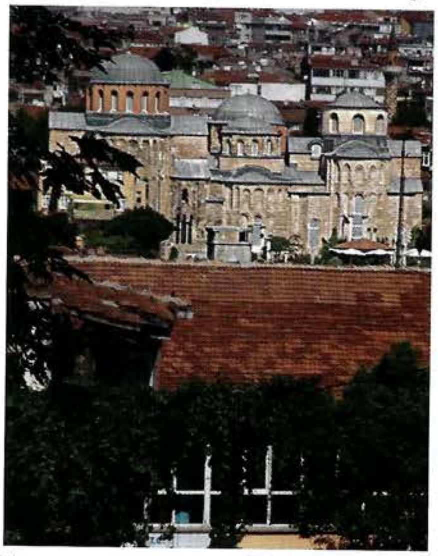
A second crucial consideration is the construction materials, which must be sympathetic to the originals. For Istanbul this is not difficult: throughout the Byzantine and Ottoman periods limestone and sandstone were quarried in the suburb of Bakırköy, where they may still be found today. The most common marble comes from Marmara Island, where the quarries are still in operation, producing the characteristic grey-veined Proconessian marble.

Brick and lime mortar are somewhat more difficult to come by. The standard modern bricks are hollow and the wrong size. Even worse are the bricks made of coloured concrete that are now finding their way into restorations. A typical Byzantine brick is solid, measures about 38cm square by about 4.5cm thick and weighs close to 10 kilos – that is, more than your hand luggage. For the work at the Zeyrek Camii, a kiln in the northern Anatolian town of Merzifon supplies the brick, produced to match the historic materials, including the clay source, so that the bricks are the right colour when fired.

Lime mortar is perhaps the most critical ingredient. It is not cheap, and it is used in large quantities. Byzantine mortars were based on quicklime, which was produced by burning limestone or marble. Sand, gravel or crushed brick were added as inert material – the last giving Byzantine mortars their characteristic pink colour. To produce a Byzantine mortar today we began with an analysis in the laboratory to create a recipe that can be replicated by the masons using generally available materials: crushed brick, brick dust, sand and lime.

The material most common in historic preservation today is concrete, or Portland cement, which is cheap, readily available, and absolutely wrong in virtually every application. Using concrete is the cardinal sin of historic preservation. It is both harder and more rigid than traditional building materials, and it will crack if there is any movement in the building. Where it joins to the historic fabric of the building it will cause damage. Lime mortar is something else: as it sets, it exhibits a condition known as plastic flow, meaning that it will adjust its shape as pressure is exerted on it, rather than break. In an area threatened by earthquakes and ground movements, a lime mortar is always preferable to concrete.

A final material is lead roofing. Unlike lead-based paints, lead sheeting is stable and environmentally safe. This is the traditional roofing material for the historic buildings of Istanbul. For domes and undulating roofs, lead sheeting can easily be formed to fit the irregular surfaces. Joints are folded and hammered together, and the sheets are anchored at the cornices. At the Zeyrek Camii, the restoration of 1966 had replaced the lead sheeting with a faux-lead roof of reinforced concrete, with a regular system of ridges to imitate the folded joints. Not surprisingly, it cracked and leaked and caused a great deal of damage. In fact, the most difficult part of our restoration was undoing the previous restoration – and this explains why we spent so much time on the roof. Most projects today will cover a historic vault with a concrete cap and then overlay it with lead – a compromise solution if ever there was one. Moreover, lead lasts longer if set over a cushion rather than directly on a hard surface. At the Zeyrek Camii, we consolidated the brick vaulting with a layer of lime mortar, then spread a layer of clay mixed with straw to cushion the lead sheeting, following traditional practice.



TOMB WITH A VIEW: THE ZEYREK DOMES, SEEN FROM SINAN'S RESTING PLACE BESIDE HIS OWN MASTERPIECE, THE SÜLEYMANIYE

The workforce is also of utmost importance. Most contractors make little distinction between restoration and reconstruction. The "restored" city walls of Istanbul might prove useful if the city is ever again under siege, but their historical character has been irrevocably damaged. Putting a new roof on a historic building is different from putting a roof on a sports stadium. And many workers may know how to build a wall or a vault, but not how to replicate or to repair an historic one. Training and supervision are essential.

Normally Zeynep or Metin will work alongside the masons, particularly as the details are finished – tape measure and spirit-level in hand. Of necessity, work proceeds slowly with a small, closely supervised workforce. And decision-making can be a bit like shopping in the bazaar: we haggle. Should the missing cornice be replaced by an Ottoman or a Byzantine form? How much damage can a brick, a wall, an arch sustain before it should be replaced? Is it possible to open blocked windows without threatening the building's stability? Metin and I will often think in terms of historically accurate or aesthetically pleasing solutions. Zeynep concentrates on structural stability, so she often has the last word. Ultimately, of course, we want the building both to reflect its long and complex history and to withstand the next earthquake.

Replacing the apse windows is a case in point. Tall and elegant, they rise to more than seven metres in height. The

DECISION-MAKING CAN BE A BIT LIKE SHOPPING IN THE BAZAAR: WE HAGGLE. SHOULD THE MISSING CORNICE BE REPLACED BY AN OTTOMAN OR A BYZANTINE FORM?

original twelfth-century apse windows had three lights side by side, separated by thin marble mullions supporting stilted arches. The forms were elegant, almost gothic – and one was even filled with stained glass (fragments of which are now in the Archaeological Museum). Originally I wanted to open all of them. But they were not designed with earthquakes in mind and suffered the consequences throughout their history. By the time we began our work, all of the east windows had been reduced considerably or totally blocked. In the north building the marble mullions had vertical cracks along their entire height. My enthusiasm for openness quickly disintegrated. In the end, we were able to open only the central light, setting within it an 8cm-thick marble window-frame to stabilise the tall opening. We did the same for three other east windows, which now have structurally stable marble frames. Don't ask how much they cost.

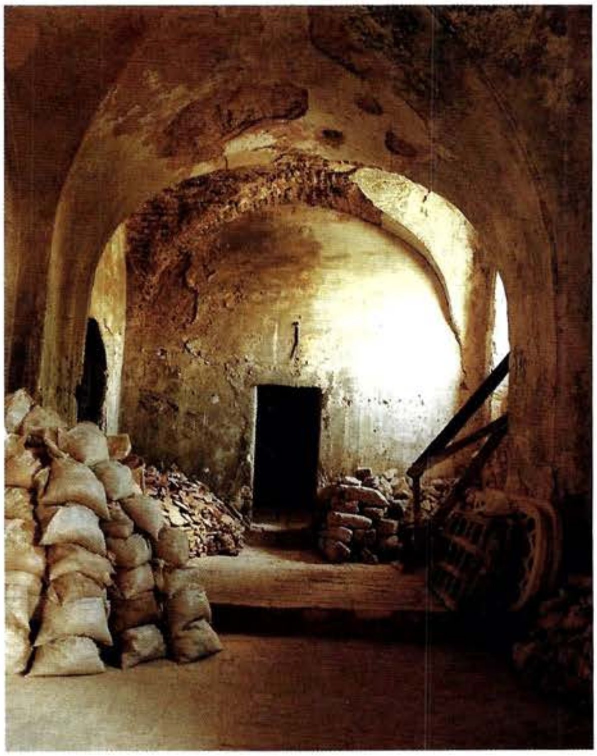
Frustratingly, much of the work that is absolutely necessary to preserve an old building will never be seen – and thus will never be appreciated – by the public. At the Zeyrek Camii, it took more than five years to restore the roof. Once the disastrous concrete covering had been removed, the roofline was returned to its historic form. The interior is now secure and dry. In the process we stitched together innumerable cracks caused by settlement or earthquake damage over the years and consolidated the vaults with a lime-mortar cap. It is a work of art, and we are very proud of it. But you will never see it. No one pays attention to a roof unless it leaks. Much of what is most obvious, such as the repointing of the east façade, was a piece of cake compared with the work on the roof.

A final note on historic preservation: after a long personal involvement with an historic building, it is not unusual for the restorer to develop proprietary sentiments. But we do not own these buildings, nor do we determine how they will be used in future. The Zeyrek Camii belongs to the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü, the Department of Pious Foundations. An historic building must have a life within its community if it is to be preserved, and for the Zeyrek Camii, continuing to function as a mosque will guarantee its survival. But the building can be a mosque and an historic monument simultaneously: the two are not mutually exclusive. Those interested in its history must respect the building as a place of prayer; at the same time, the faithful must respect the historic character of their mosque.

Over the course of the last decade, we have, in essence, taken a forgotten monument and quite literally put it on the map. Touristic and scholarly groups now regularly visit the Zeyrek, and it has taken its rightful place as one of the most evocative monuments of the city's rich and complex history. With the completion of the 2005 season, however, the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü assumed responsibility for the funding and oversight of the restoration, and our involvement with the project came to an end. We were able to complete the roof, replace dozens of windows, repair and repoint large areas of the external façades, and even expose some decorative mosaics and frescoes in the window reveals. The building has never looked better – not in the last century anyway.

Unfortunately, we were not able to extend our interventions into the main spaces of the interior, which should be an important component of the Vakıflar's subsequent interventions. But we have realised our initial goal of rescuing a major historic monument from oblivion.

Historic preservation often reminds me of an old *New Yorker* cartoon. A woman has taken her car to the garage for repairs. The mechanic presents his estimate, telling her: "Of course, you realise this is only an estimate. The actual costs will be considerably higher." Historic preservation takes commitment, time and money – much more than one could ever imagine at the start. But in the end, how much is our cultural heritage worth? For the true believer, it is priceless. ◆



LEFT: THE GALLERY, NOW SERVING AS A STOREROOM, IS STACKED WITH BUILDING MATERIALS OLD AND NEW. OPPOSITE: THE NEWLY INSTALLED MARBLE WINDOW IN THE NORTH BUILDING

Robert Ousterhout, newly appointed professor of the history of art at the University of Pennsylvania, is the author of *The Art of the Kariye Camii* (Scala/Archaeology and Art Publications, available from cornucopia.net) and *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton University Press)

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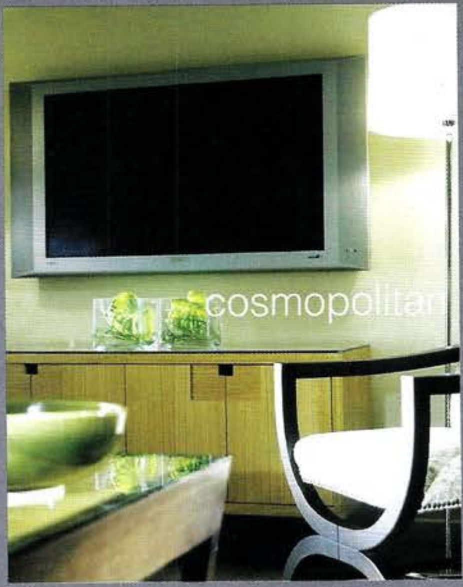
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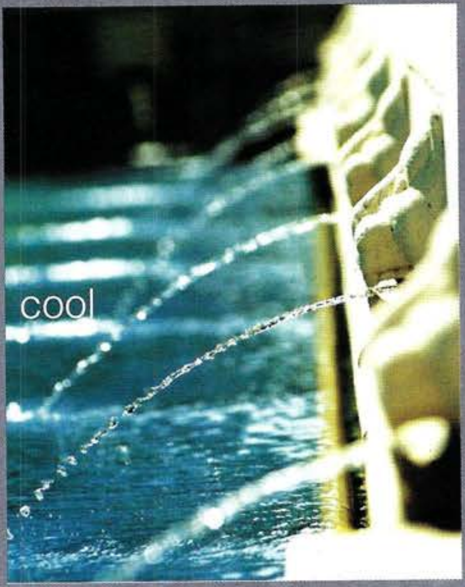

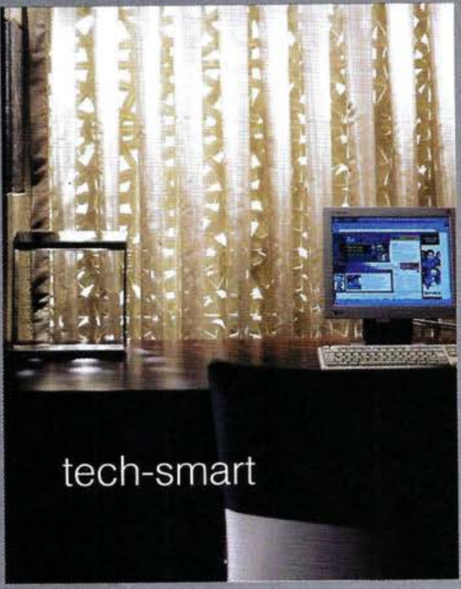

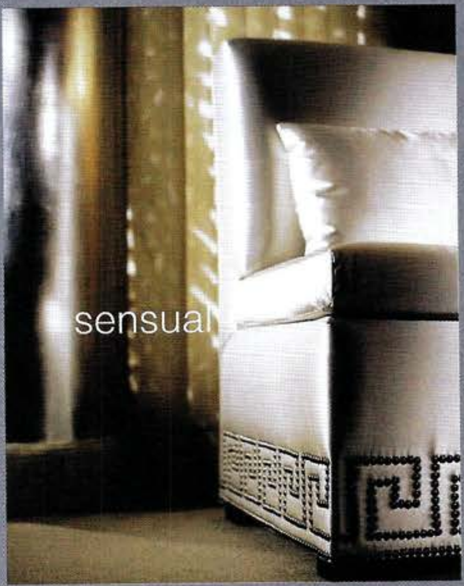

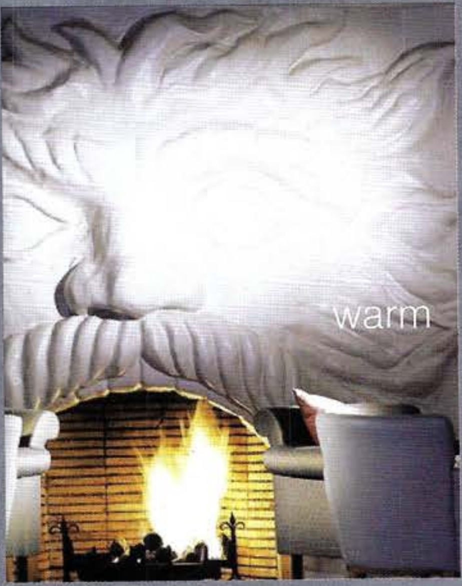

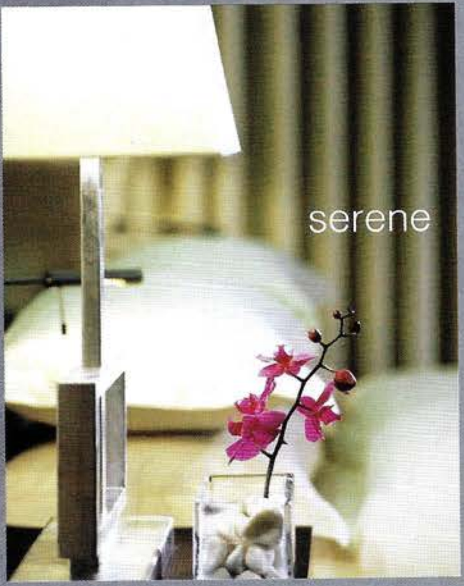

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Private view

ANDREW FINKEL SAYS FAREWELL TO AN INSPIRING TEACHER OF TURKISH, HAILS AN INDEFATIGABLE TRAVELLER AND TEXTILE COLLECTOR, AND SEES EAST MEET WEST IN AN ARTISTIC CLASH OF CULTURES

Lessons in the grammar of life

Güzin Berkmen taught Turkish to three generations of my family and we all mourn her passing. I was thirteen when I first opened a notebook at her table, sipped a cup of *orta şekerli* coffee and imbibed a new world. It was an introduction I shared with at least three British ambassadors, countless captains of industry and their spouses, a myriad of scholars and the odd spy.

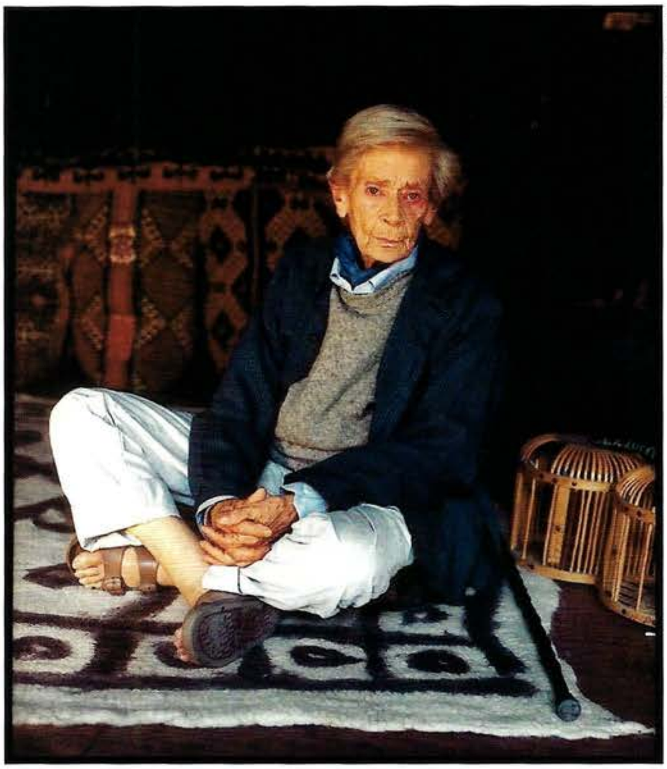
Güzin was born in 1914, was a lecturer in the newly founded foreign language department of Istanbul University and for several years co-starred in a popular radio programme with Dorothy Iz to teach her compatriots English. It wasn't until 1959 that she began to pioneer the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language, and she was still giving lessons aged 90. She was infinitely deserving of the MBE she was awarded in 1999, having done more than any human being alive to further understanding, in the most literal sense of the word, between Turkey and those who wanted to know it better. Who could think ill of a country when the first person you got to know was gracious, sophisticated and full of enthusiasm?

There was no off-the-peg method when Güzin Berkmen began teaching Turkish, and techniques that were radical then might seem conservative now. She taught the rules of how language is constructed – its grammar. I had always assumed that she remained a traditionalist because that is what she knew, but she assured me once that she was perfectly current with modern methods where students assimilate the structure of language through repetition, without the filter of their native tongue. She had rejected these, not from the conservatism of age but from the experience age brings. Learning by rote works for children with a lifetime ahead of them, but grammar is a short cut for intelligent adults. You may never know the language perfectly but at least you have a set of rules that allows you to cope.

Of course, Güzin taught more than language. Those of us reared in the Berkmen Ecole were completely in her thrall. I returned to Turkey and to her table several times after the age of thirteen – before I went to university, before I got married – at what always seemed periods of transition.

She was an endless font of good advice that you sensed she would never follow herself. But, most of all, she led by example, with an ability to extract joy from the simplest things. Not everyone who was taught by her acquired perfect Turkish, but we all came away with a richer feel for life's grammar.

A wanderer in nomad's land


JÜRGEN FRANK

JOSEPHINE POWELL: CHAMPION OF NOMADS

Like a villain returning to the scene of the crime, I returned to Cihangir to interview Josephine Powell once more. Josephine, or rather a photograph taken by her, featured on the front cover of issue 30 of this magazine, and since then the story of this Manhattan émigrée who wandered from Rome to Istanbul to Kabul appears to have struck a chord of wonder.

Josephine first came to Turkey in 1955, but only relatively late in her career did she begin recording (and collecting) the lives and physical culture of Turkey's nomads. The work and collection of CORNUCOPIA's cover girl have subsequently been fêted by many organisations; she has, to her open embarrassment, begun collecting enough awards to outshine the medals cabinet of your average dictator.

The purpose of my visit was to record an interview for the Textile Museum in Washington, to be used at an award ceremony and tribute dinner in her honour. There is more to come: a vast retrospective of Powell's photographs is scheduled for the International Conference on Oriental Carpets in Istanbul in April 2007, and another exhibition of kilims from her collection will be held at the same time. She is busy preparing the catalogues. The best news of all is that her vast collection of kilims and artefacts, archives of photos and notes may at last have found the permanent home they deserve.

The moor and more

Whether by accident or design, the *East–West* exhibition at Tate Britain is the opposite of the artfully renovated Jameel Gallery at the Victoria and Albert (lavishly photographed in this issue). *East–West* is not really an exhibition so much as a guerrilla intervention – the planting of unexpected objects among the Stubbs and Rossettis. Iznikware pops up near the Constables, Persian miniatures in front of Millais' *Death of Ophelia*, and the odd Ottoman *firman* round the corner from the oil-painted carpet by Holbein.

Objects Between Cultures is the exhibition's subtitle, and the question you are meant to ask yourself is: "What are these things doing here?" There is not always an easy answer, though we are reminded that national cultures never existed in a cosy vacuum. The relationship between East and West is as much about what we share as what divides us.

The main act is the stylish portrait of the Moroccan Ambassador Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud ben Mohammed Anoun, painted around 1600. It is an image copiously reproduced in student editions of *Othello* as the prototypical Moor, and it is startling to see the original. "So what are you doing here?" he challenges the visitor, with his withering stare. Then his eyes glower at you as you walk round the room. Mona Lisa with attitude.

Peace initiative

The autumn rain is washing away memories of a brutally hot summer in Istanbul. Thankfully this year we residents along the Bosphorus could keep the windows open without the amplified thump-thump baseline of the clubs across the water playing basketball with our internal organs. The nights have been quieter. The municipality has finally woken up to the realisation that some of us would like to sleep. Residents' associations in villages up and down the Bosphorus have persuaded the mayor to enforce sound-abatement regulations. The city has imposed massive fines and shut down the worst offenders for a few nights as penalty. As a result clubs are having to turn down the volume and put up sound barriers to change the acoustics. ◆

andrewfinkel@cornucopia.net

LETTERS

Magic-lantern Istanbul

In response to the photographs of the 1920s and 30s in your last issue (*Othmar's Dream*, CORNUCOPIA 35), I am enclosing a set of earlier photographs of Istanbul that I thought might be of interest to your readers. Originally they were magic-lantern glass slides. Several were cracked or broken, but even so I think the photographs have come up very well.

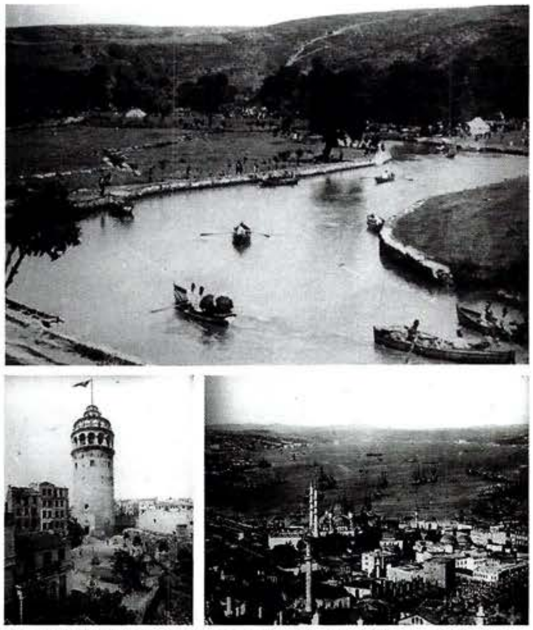
The slides were found under the floorboards of a small house in the Suffolk town of Leiston. The house was recently bought by the daughter of my cleaner, and she gave them to me.

I have given much thought to how they could have come to be in Leiston, let alone in a workman's house. The answer, I think, is that Leiston had large engineering works owned by Richard Garrett and called after him. They exported machinery all over Europe – I have even seen one of their tractors still in use in Russia.

Quite often important orders were delivered with one of the Garrett workmen in attendance to make sure that all was well on arrival and to teach the buyer how to use it. I suspect that this was the case with a machine sent to Istanbul, and that the man who accompanied it was passionate about magic-lantern shows. From the numbers on the slides, he obviously had hundreds of them, but I cannot find anyone who knows what happened to the rest of his collection.

In the photograph of the Galata Bridge the steamers are paddle-steamers. The one of the harbour shows that the majority of shipping was still in sail.

Clare Foss
Aldeburgh, Suffolk



SWEET WATERS OF EUROPE (TOP); THE GALATA TOWER, (ABOVE LEFT), AND THE BOSPHORUS (ABOVE RIGHT)

Far from tongue-tied

In reply to Fatma Ayla Hariri (*Language Barrier?* CORNUCOPIA 35), a few facts might shed light on the points she raises.

In the 1800s, French was the diplomatic and drawing room/social language. Shopping, marketing, business, etc were conducted in Greek. There was, therefore, no pressing need for James William Whittall to learn Turkish. This was partly because, of all the minorities sheltered by the Turks, the Greeks formed the largest community.

After James William's grandfather, Charlton Whittall, entertained Sultan Abdülaziz at his home in Bournabat, Smyrna, on April 24, 1863, the letter of thanks he received from the Sublime Porte was in French.

When Grandmother (great-aunt to the second respondent below) called on neighbouring Turkish ladies, who wore European dress indoors, they spoke French. After the Capitulations were rescinded, Grandmother strove to learn Turkish, but Osman was happier with instructions in Greek.

The Whittalls lived and worked in Istanbul/Constantinople for five generations. James William's eldest son, Frederick Edwin Whittall, was involved in sensitive, high-level negotiations to persuade Turkey to withdraw from the First World War. Turkish and English language skills were essential tools of this trade. Both the respondents' fathers and grandfathers spoke Turkish quite fluently in order to conduct their businesses.

By the third generation, Hazel Whittall had married a Turkish gentleman, Zeki Sporel. Her descendants are Turkish and continue to live in Istanbul.

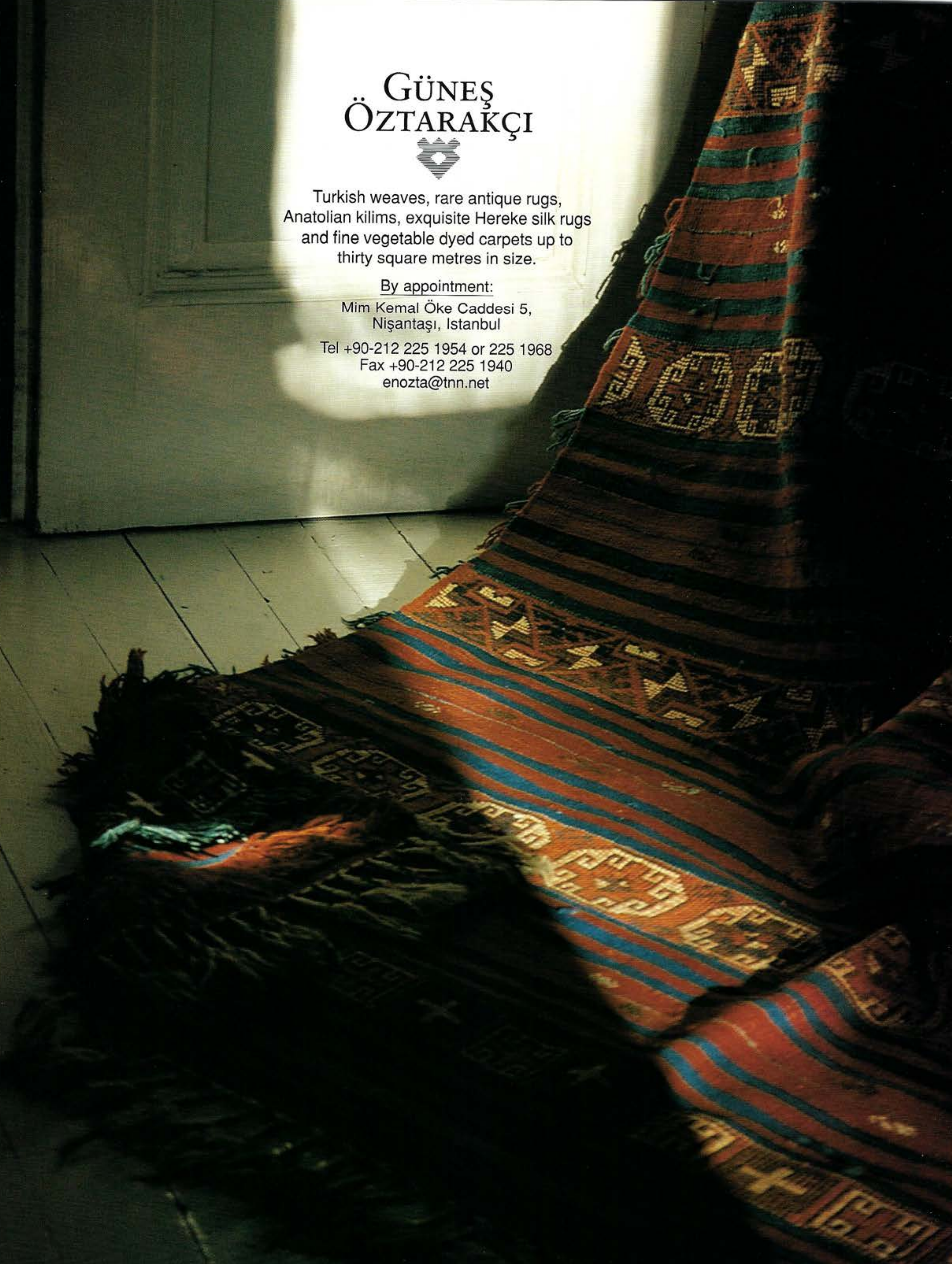
The Whittalls had a great love of the countryside and the sea: see Dr Geoffrey Whittall's *Shooting in Turkey*, available from the family. The family also has copies of English translations by Hugh McKinley Whittall of Turkish poems that he fancied.

The co-respondent of this letter was educated in Istanbul at the English High School for Girls. English and French lessons took place in the morning, Turkish ones in the afternoon. She worked as a Turkish bilingual secretary, as a freelance Turkish interpreter at ports and airports, and is now very involved with the Anglo-Turkish Society in England.

We hope this thumbnail sketch of our family history shows that we did have Turkish friends, and that we did learn Turkish.

Yolande Whittall,
London SE5
Betty Whittall McKernan,
Hampshire

letters@cornucopia.net



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HEAVEN ON A PLATE

SERVED AT SIXTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN FEASTS, THE BISCUIT KNOWN AS ŞEKER GURABIYE IS PROBABLY THE FORERUNNER OF TODAY'S CLASSIC TURKISH SHORTBREAD, UN KURABIYESI. IT IS ALSO THE MOTHER OF A WHOLE ARRAY OF DELICIOUS DESCENDANTS, ITS SHEER SIMPLICITY THE KEY TO ITS VERSATILITY. TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY BERRIN TOROLSAN

MELTING MOUTHFUL: IN THE CLASSIC SHORTBREAD 'UN KURABIYESI', THE FLAVOUR OF CLOVE PERFECTLY BALANCES THE BUTTERY RICHNESS

When Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent's two youngest sons, the princes Beyazıt and Cihangir, were circumcised on November 11, 1539, the festivities surrounding the ceremony were designed not just for the court, royal servants and dignitaries, but for all the sultan's subjects. They included spectacular processions of guilds, acrobats, magicians, tournaments and non-stop feasting.

A certain spiritual satiation was aimed at as well as physical. Tables overflowed with pilavs tinted in different colours, flower-scented sherbets, gilded confections and luxurious ingredients such as saffron or sugar, symbols of wealth and welfare and sources of joy and happiness.

A handwritten register records the quantities and prices of tableware and kitchen utensils, fireworks and decorations needed for the occasion, as well as a list of dishes and the ingredients that were purchased.

First come the savoury courses: soups, stews, roasts, pilavs, *böreks*, and thousands of savoury buns known as *çörek*, which are accompanied by fragrant, flower-scented sherbets of inexhaustible variety. Then follows a prodigious procession of sweets that includes countless puddings, helvas, candies, compôtes *(hoşaf)*, jams and jellies, served with a kaleidoscope of sweet pastries. All in all, three tons of sugar were consumed. Another ton-and-a-half of sugar (25 *kantar* is the measurement given) was required just for the three sweet pastries, *şeker börek*, *şeker nukl* and *şeker gurabiye*, offered on "henna night" on the eve of the ceremony.

Şeker börek can be traced today to an Azeri speciality called *şeker bura*: puffed-up half-moons made of a creamed dough, oozing with a sweet filling of almond paste flavoured with cardamom. Though little-known today, *şeker nukl* – or simply *nokul*, as it is now called – is a thick shortbread baked on a tray and served cut into delicious buttery lozenges. It is still found in parts of Turkey. In Erzincan, in north central Anatolia, for instance, it is the custom for the groom's family to send *nokul* as a gift to the bride's home for the henna party on the night before the wedding.

What is still very much with us today is the third item, *şeker gurabiye*, which, like *nokul*, has shed its sugary epithet in modern usage. In the days when it could be obtained only from cane, sugar was a luxury. Imperial account books for 1640 list four grades of sugar: even the cheapest was four times more expensive than honey; the best, sold in *dirhems* (a *dirhem* being about 3 grams), was ten times dearer. Quite understandably, anything made with sugar proudly announced the fact. Now it is the other way round, of course: sugar lost its value as a precious ingredient in the nineteenth century with the introduction of sugar beet, which could be produced almost anywhere. Now that sugar is accessible to all, anything made with honey sounds much more appealing.

The etymology of the word *gurabiye* is still a puzzle to linguists: *kurabiye* (as it is written in Turkish) is a domed biscuit-like confection that should melt in the mouth. It is alive and well not only in Turkey but, with slight variations, over an enormous geographical area. In Palestine it is called *ghraybeh*, in Syria *gh'rayba*, in Iraq *ghroyebah*, in Morocco *ghoriba*; in the Balkans, Bulgaria has *kourabiya*, Bosnia *gurabija*, Romania *corabea*, Greece *kourabiethes* and Russia *koorabie*. Obviously, the agent of transmission was the Ottoman Empire: all her former domains adopted these biscuits in the course of four centuries of Ottoman rule.

The recipe varies even less than the spelling of the ubiquitous name: it is a medieval composition of sugar, butter and flour whose proportions have survived miraculously unchanged.

THOUGH LITTLE-KNOWN TODAY, ŞEKER NUKL – OR SIMPLY NOKUL, AS IT IS NOW CALLED – IS A THICK SHORTBREAD BAKED ON A TRAY AND SERVED CUT INTO DELICIOUS BUTTERY LOZENGES

Kurabiye in the Middle East, North Africa and the Balkans is a specific biscuit. Judging by its mention in the imperial menu of 1539, this was also the case in sixteenth-century Istanbul. Over the years, however, *kurabiye* in Turkey has come to be the generic name for a huge variety of sweet biscuits made with a butter dough. The *şeker gurabiye* served at the imperial henna night was probably today's classic Turkish shortbread, *un kurabiyesi*, but it is also the mother of a whole array of delicious descendants, its sheer simplicity the key to its versatility.

Kurabiyes are still very much part of family life and are best home-made. Every child has sweet memories of coming home to the heavenly aroma of freshly baked *kurabiye*. Every mother, every aunt, every grandmother, every neighbour has her own speciality, a *kurabiye* she excels at, which is almost part of her very identity. On festive days, at family gatherings, on birthdays and even at modest tea parties, people come round with their own cakes and *kurabiye* offerings. There will be a gathering of *kurabiyes* on the table, from the very good to the utterly outstanding, all to be nibbled happily as tea, sherbet or coffee are sipped.

Although they can never really compete with home-made ones, shop-bought *kurabiyes* can be very good too. In the 1650s, Evliya Çelebi recorded in his *Seyyahatname* (Book of Travels) fifty bakers in Istanbul who specialised in *gurabiye*.

In the past a much wider range of exotic ingredients was used to flavour the biscuits, including cinnamon, ginger, mastic, saffron, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg and rose- and orange-blossom water. Today we are more or less limited to vanilla, and we also reach instantly for baking powder, whereas raising agents formerly included vinegar, bicarbonate of soda and filtered wood ash. Another forgotten secret of crisp but crumbly biscuits was the addition of a little tail-fat from the fat-tailed sheep, equivalent to the use of lard in the West.

One of the classics of the Ottoman cookery book is *acıbadem kurabiyesi* – literally bitter almond biscuits, or macaroons. They may have been introduced in the fifteenth century by Sephardi Jews when they were expelled from Spain and Portugal and welcomed by the Ottoman sultan Beyazıt II.

The right way to make almond paste was explained in detail in 1844 by the Ottoman food enthusiast Mehmet Kamil Efendi, professor at the imperial school of medicine: almonds are pounded to a paste in a stone mortar then combined with the same quantity of loaf sugar pounded to a fine powder, plus egg

EACH TO HER OWN: THE BISCUITS MY AUNT HAS BEEN MAKING ALL HER LIFE, FULL OF THE FLAVOUR OF CITRUS OR MASTIC

whites. A tip on how to prepare *acıbadem kurabiyesi* more economically comes from a book written fifty years later by another Ottoman gentleman, Mahmut Nedim bin Tosun: he suggests cutting the almond paste with the meal of dried beans.

Kurabiyes were listed in old recipe books in the chapter on sweet dishes. They were classified as dry, sweet pastries (as opposed to moist, syrupy sweet pastries such as *baklava* and *revani*), which suggests they were served as desserts. An echo of this custom survives perhaps in the macaroons, *croquants* or wafer biscuits that accompany the sorbets and ice creams of our day. Although the name did not travel, emigrants no doubt ensured that many a *kurabiye* recipe resurfaced in the New World as an American cookie.

These biscuits will keep almost indefinitely in an airtight container – a ready supply of delicious instant energy to be enjoyed by everyone, old and young, visitor and family alike.

UN KURABIYESI
CLASSIC SHORTBREAD

100g butter (room temperature)
1 heaped tablespoon (35g) caster sugar
2 cups (200g) plain flour
Handful of cloves
Icing sugar for dusting

In Ottoman Bursa, silver trays laden with *kurabiyes* shaped like pears were sent round to the wedding house by friends and neighbours before the ceremony started.

The classic ratio of butter to sugar in old recipes is one-to-one, with slight variations. But this recipe uses considerably less sugar, as people tend to have far less of a sweet tooth than they used to. For best results, use clarified butter. Many cooks like to use margarine, saying that it produces a crisper texture, but personally I avoid it.

The trick is to make sure the pears retain their shape during baking, yet melt in the mouth when eaten. The pungent note of the cloves and the buttery richness of the shortbread complement each other to perfection.

1 Cream the butter with the sugar. Stir in the flour and keep kneading until the dough holds together. Add more flour if the dough is sticky.

2 Take a small piece of dough and roll it between your palms into an egg shape, then into a pear shape. Place gently on a baking tray, pressing the base to make it sit up. Repeat with the rest of the dough and, if time allows, chill in the fridge for half an hour before baking.

3 Insert a clove into the top of each pear to look like the stalk of the fruit, and bake in a preheated oven for 12–15 minutes, without allowing them to colour. The *kurabiyes* should be pale and soft, but will firm up when cooled.

4 While still warm, dust the biscuits with icing sugar and leave to cool. Then dust with sugar again, whether they are to be stored or served at once.

A NOTE ON MEASUREMENT: a "cup" is here taken to mean an average teacup (about 100g).

◇

FINDIKLI KURABIYE
HAZELNUT BISCUITS

250g butter (softened)
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1/2 teaspoon vanilla essence
2 cups hazelnuts, coarsely ground
5 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
Pinch of salt
Handful of whole hazelnuts to garnish

This easy recipe is a surefire winner, and the biscuits will keep almost indefinitely in an airtight container without losing their crunch. The quantities given here make three or four dozen biscuits.

1 In a mixing bowl whisk the butter and sugar. Then beat in the eggs, vanilla essence and ground hazelnuts.

2 Mix the flour with the bicarbonate of soda and salt, and sift into the bowl. Knead the mixture briefly, so that everything holds together and becomes a slightly stiff dough. If it is sticky, store in the fridge until firm.

3 Roll pieces of dough between your palms into walnut-sized balls and arrange them, well apart, on a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper.

4 Press a hazelnut into each ball, gently flattening the dough, which helps it to cook evenly. Bake the biscuits in a moderate oven for 20 minutes, until lightly browned.

◇

ACIBADEM KURABIYESI
MACAROONS

1 cup blanched ground almonds
1 cup icing sugar
4 egg whites
5 or 6 whole almonds (preferably bitter)
Rice paper (optional)

Traditionally the dough of *acıbadem kurabiyesi*, as with macaroons everywhere, is dropped onto edible rounds of rice paper. But one can also use a sheet of greaseproof paper. Today in Istanbul shops they are sold in pairs, stuck together back to back. If you do not have ready-ground almonds, buy about 100g of whole almonds. Drop them in boiling water and remove the skins. Dry them with a kitchen towel and grind them finely. (In the old days they would have been pounded into almond paste in a stone mortar.) Bitter almonds (*acıbadem*), which give the *kurabiye* its name and its potent almond flavour, are placed on top. But sweet almonds can be used if necessary.

1 Stir the ground almonds, icing sugar, and egg whites to a thick mixture.

2 Drop small amounts of the mixture onto a paper-lined baking tray.

3 Place one blanched whole almond on each *kurabiye* and bake in a cool to moderate oven for 15–20 minutes, until lightly browned.

◇

LIMONLU KURABIYE
LEMON CRESCENTS

100g butter (softened)
4 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons lemon zest
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 cups flour
Egg white for glazing

These *kurabiyes* make excellent teatime biscuits – rich, but light and lemony – and they fill the house with a delectable aroma.

1 Whisk the butter, sugar and lemon zest until fluffy. Mix in the lemon juice, reduce the speed and gradually stir in the flour.

2 Continue beating briefly to incorporate all the ingredients. Place in the fridge to chill for a little while.

3 Taking small amounts of dough, roll them in your palms into finger-thick sticks and arrange them wide apart on a buttered baking tray. Then shape them into small crescents with tapered ends and brush them with lightly beaten egg white. Bake for 12–15 minutes, until golden.

CRESCENT-SHAPED LEMON BISCUITS

◇

ANTEP KURABIYESI
PISTACHIO RINGS

100g butter (preferably clarified)
1/2 cup ground pistachios
1 cup flour
1 cup semolina
2 tablespoons milk
1 cup sugar
Extra whole pistachios to garnish

This crunchy *kurabiye* is from Gaziantep, the land of emerald-green pistachios. The recipe comes from the book *Ayintab'tan Gaziantep'e (From Antep to Gaziantep)* by Ayfer Ünsal. She also mentions mixing the butter with a little rendered fat for a more delicate texture.

1 Whisk the butter and the ground pistachios to a smooth paste. Add the flour and the semolina, and stir in the milk to moisten the dough. Lastly, add the sugar and knead further to combine all the ingredients.

2 Taking a small amount of dough, roll it between your hands to a length the thickness of a finger. Make a ring and gently press the ends together. Then insert a whole pistachio at this meeting point.

3 Arrange the rings well apart on a buttered tray, and bake in a moderate oven without browning, so that they do not lose their fine green colour.

◇

SAFRANLI KURABIYE
SAFFRON-SCENTED BISCUITS

Pinch of saffron filaments
2 tablespoons rosewater
50g butter (softened)
4 tablespoons sugar
1 egg
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
Extra granulated sugar for topping

Although the ingredients are slightly different, these biscuits resemble *saffranskubbar*, the saffron buns traditionally baked in Sweden to celebrate the feast of St Lucia. The Swedish king Charles XII, who took refuge from the Russians in Turkey in 1709, took his Turkish chef home with him. It is tempting to think that this is the origin of the Swedish variant.

1 Soak the saffron filaments in rosewater.

2 Cream the butter with the sugar. Stir in

ALL TIED UP IN KNOTS, BISCUITS FRAGRANT WITH SAFFRON AND ROSEWATER

the egg, then the saffron and rosewater and whisk. Add the flour and knead until the dough is pliable, like putty.

3 Take small amounts of dough and roll them between your palms, shaping them into long, thin pieces. Fold these to create little twists or knots or bows.

4 Sprinkle another tablespoon of sugar onto a piece of paper. Dip each biscuit in sugar and bake until rosy-cheeked.

Hava Kurabiyesi
Meringues

4 egg whites (room temperature)
150g caster or icing sugar
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice

Airy, feathery puffs of cloud... everyone loves meringues, just as they always have. Who knows how long ago meringues entered the repertoire of Turkish confectioners? Certainly long before the invention of the electric whisk. In 1828 an anonymous chef used a clean broom to whisk 120 egg whites. And in 1882, Fahriye Hanım, a contemporary of Mrs Beeton, published a recipe in her book *Ev Kadını* calling for ten beaten egg whites. Her whisk was made of tender, flexible hazel branches.

1 Beat the egg whites with a pinch of salt on high speed, gradually spooning in the sugar, until stiff.

2 Fold in the lemon juice. Continue beating for a minute or so until the whites are glossy and start to form small peaks.

3 Using two tablespoons, shape the mixture into ovals and drop them onto a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper. Dust with extra sugar to give them a pearly sheen. Place in a very low oven for an hour, so that they dry, rather than cook. Turn off the heat and leave undisturbed in the cooling oven.

Kakaolu Kurabiye
Chocolate Biscuits

100g butter (room temperature)
4 tablespoons sugar
1 cup ground almonds
1 cup flour
4 tablespoons cocoa powder
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
Extra cocoa powder for dusting

It is hard to imagine life without chocolate, yet it was introduced quite late into Turkish cooking. The 1882 cookery book *Ev Kadını* mentions it only once: next to the recipe for coffee boiled sweets is one for chocolate boiled sweets. This recipe must be more recent.

1 With an electric whisk, combine the butter and sugar in a bowl. Mix the ground almonds, flour, cocoa and cinnamon, then sieve them into the bowl. Beat well to incorporate all the ingredients.

2 Knead briefly until the dough holds together. Taking small amounts, roll little balls of dough between your palms and arrange them well apart on a buttered baking tray. Flatten them into biscuit shapes using the tines of a fork or the base of a small coffee cup dipped in caster sugar.

3 Bake the biscuits for about 15 minutes until just firm to the touch. While still warm, dust them with extra cocoa powder, which will settle and slightly melt in the indentations.

Halamin Kurabiyesi
My Aunt's Biscuits

1/2 cup (50g) butter (melted)
1/2 cup olive oil
1 cup natural yoghurt
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon lemon juice
4 cups flour
2 or 3 pieces of mastic (or 2 tablespoons freshly grated lemon zest)
1/2 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (or baking powder)

These are one of my beloved aunt's specialities. When I asked her where her recipe came from, she simply said that she had found herself making them ever since she could remember – she is now ninety. Light and fragrant, they make wonderful tea-time biscuits. Any number of different flavourings are possible. Lemon or orange peel are the most frequently used, but mastic is also exquisite. Mastic – drops of crystallised resin from the Mediterranean mastic tree, *Pistacia lentiscus* – is an aromatic gum that was popular with Ottoman ladies, who chewed it as a breath freshener.

1 Whisk the butter, oil, yoghurt and sugar until well blended. Mix in the lemon juice and beat in the eggs.

2 Pound the mastic crystals with two teaspoons of sugar.

3 Measure out the flour, mix in the pounded mastic and bicarbonate of soda (or baking powder), then sift the mixture into the bowl containing the yoghurt, sugar and eggs. Beat a little more, then knead by hand until all the ingredients are blended into a soft, pliable dough. Form the dough into a ball, cover and store in the fridge for about two hours.

4 Roll small amounts of dough into walnut-sized balls and arrange them well apart on a buttered baking tray. Bake in a preheated moderate oven for about 20 minutes, undisturbed, until they are deliciously golden and puffed up. ◆

Berrin Torolsan: bt@cornucopia.net

RELAX THE HILTON ISTANBUL WAY...

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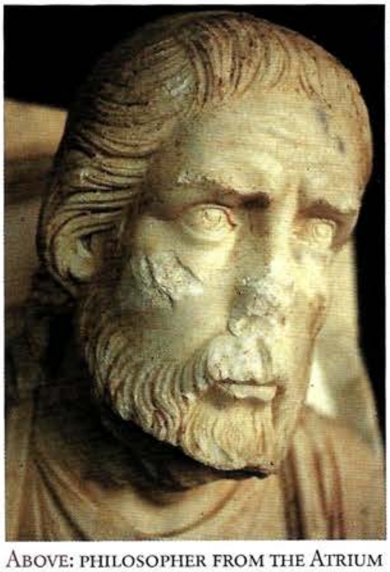
Nothing like a good ruin

WHEN IT COMES TO UNIQUE AND FASCINATING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES, VISITORS TO TURKEY ARE SPOILT FOR CHOICE. IN THIS ISSUE WE BEGIN A REGULAR SERIES BY PATRICIA DAUNT, IN WHICH SHE WILL GUIDE READERS THROUGH A RANGE OF ITINERARIES AND POINT OUT SOME HIGHLIGHTS THAT THE GUIDEBOOKS DON'T TELL YOU ABOUT

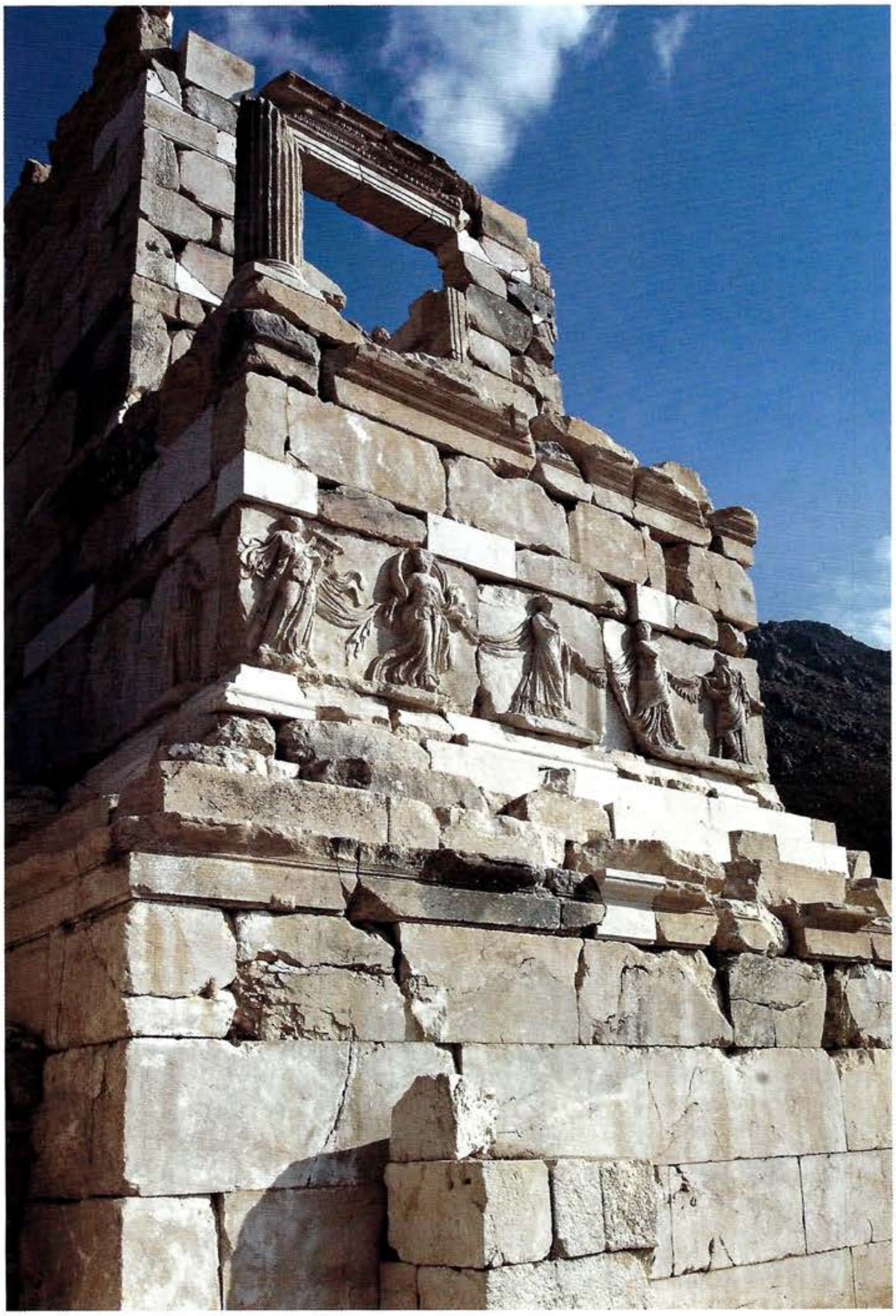
Turkey attracts hordes of professional scholars – archaeologists in particular – and other single-minded, well-informed visitors who know just what they are after. But the non-expert visitor in search of more than sea and sun, who wants to combine pleasure with ruins, may be glad of a hint or two, hence this series.

Four decades ago the late George E Bean – whose series of archaeological guidebooks remain classics every visitor should have – believed few people could pass a pile of ruins without some stirring of curiosity; but that, without help, the interest so aroused would not be satisfied.

Despite the plethora of excellent guidebooks today, even the discerning traveller can miss by a stone's throw a lesser archaeological gem, in which Turkey is so rich.



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY EXCAVATIONS AT APHRODISIAS



SAGALASSOS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

ABOVE: PHILOSOPHER FROM THE ATRIUM HOUSE AT APHRODISIAS, 5TH CENTURY AD
RIGHT: THE HEROON AT SAGALASSOS DATES FROM THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS

Even at a major site, a lack of up-to-date knowledge may deprive him of some recently unearthed pearl. This column, written by a non-specialist, aims to point fellow non-specialists towards such hidden treasures.

Why not take pleasure in flitting from century to century, from civilisation to civilisation, combining a little art history, botany, ornithology and dendrology with walking; and still allow time to indulge in some sketching, swimming and boating? My guide aims to take you through a series of archeo-touristic itineraries which, taken in total or à la carte, encourage just that.

I start with an arbitrary sweep across western Turkey, from Ankara (Angora) to Antalya (Attaleia) by way of Konya, Beyşehir and the Xanthus Valley. Long, heavily laden camel trains were as much a part of the Anatolian landscape as pelicans summering on the lakes when I first travelled this route in 1960. It may be less romantic these days, but the roads are now good and the hotels too.

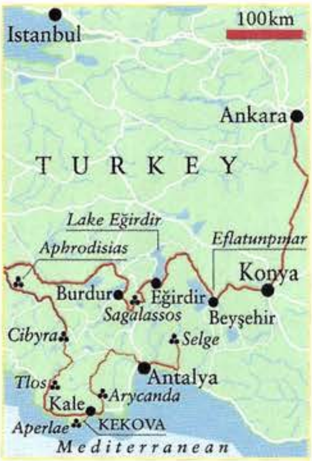
A RECENTLY DISCOVERED FRAGMENT OF MOSAIC FLOOR IN SAGALASSOS

SAGALASSOS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

ANKARA TO ANTALYA IN NINE DAYS

Day 1: Ankara to Konya

Don't let anyone tell you Ankara is a boring modern capital city. Old Ankara, with its citadel and sixth-century outer walls, is a most agreeable place to spend a night or two. Within a stone's throw of its main gate is a famous Black Sea restaurant, the Washington, with stunning views across the modern city. Fifty metres away is an impeccable hotel, the Angora House, recently converted from two old Armenian houses. Below them, in two fine fifteenth-century buildings, is the world-class **Museum of Anatolian Civilisations.** As well as the substantial remains of Roman Ancyra's great **Temple to Augustus**, on no account miss the enchanting late-thirteenth-century Seljuk mosque, the **Arslanhane Camii.** Ask permission to climb to the women's balcony for a closer look at the carved ceiling and a sight of the dark turquoise-tiled *mihrab* and fine wooden *mimber* through the curtain of twenty-four wooden columns. If you get up early, a long morning will suffice for all this. After lunch, the main road to Konya – for road-side botanising best in late May – brings you by early evening to the Mevlana Karşısı square in the centre of bustling, noisy Konya, classical Iconium.



SUSANNA HICKLING

Day 2: Konya to Eğirdir via Beyşehir

Konya enjoyed great prosperity in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, when it was capital of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. The morning's sightseeing in this overgrown town concentrates on the monuments of the remarkable Keykubad dynasty. The refinement of buildings, which have withstood numerous earthquakes since the empire broke up, is testimony to that dynasty's brilliance – not least **Mevlana's Tekke**, now transformed into a museum. A must is the **Alaeddin Camii.** Take a tolerant view of the restoration of the great rectangular prayer hall. If the Ministry of Culture had not propped it up, albeit crudely, the whole mosque would have slid down the hill after the most recent earthquake. The carved ebony mimber is the most exquisite in all the central Anatolian territories of Rum. Don't miss the two *türbe* in the courtyard beyond the prayer hall.

Before reaching **Beyşehir**, gather energy for the unavoidable encounter with Kurdish sock-sellers lying in wait outside the truly beautiful **Eşrefoğlu Mosque**, completed in 1299. It is easy to persuade the imam – he isn't exactly reluctant – to intone the call to prayer for you. And spend a night or two beside **Lake Eğirdir**, the most beautiful in Turkey's Lake District, with hiking opportunities to match. If time allows, make the short detour to **Eflatunpınar**: a sacred spring, a sanctuary of great antiquity, which archaeologists have recently cleared to reveal once again the "four Hittite kings carved in massive stone" that Gertrude Bell describes in her diary. Scholars are still puzzling over them; they may even be pre-Hittite.

Day 3: Eğirdir to Aphrodisias via Sagalassos and Burdur

Try to visit the site of ancient **Sagalassos** on a Friday so as not to miss **market day in Ağlasun** before driving the winding road up to the highest classical site in Anatolia. The long puff on foot up through the city to the theatre is rewarding at every step, with wonderful wild flowers in May/June. Prof Marc Waelkens's international team excavates and restores at such a rate that there will always be something new to see: the **bouliterion** just unearthed on the western edge of the upper agora should be noted; see whether you are convinced that the Neon Library, with its spectacular mosaic and wall niches, was indeed a library. The short drive to the little-visited **Burdur Museum** brings you to an array of remarkable sculptures excavated from Sagalassos and Cibyra, well displayed in a new purpose-built annexe.

In May/June, the road on to Aphrodisias is bordered by fields of opium poppies, particularly around the old village of **Hacılar**, whose distinctive Chalcolithic pots take pride of place in the Ankara Museum.

Day 4: Aphrodisias

There is no end to the riches of this beautiful Imperial Roman city. Octavian the Triumvir, a few years before he became Emperor Augustus, wrote:

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"Aphrodisias is the one city in all of Asia I have selected to be my own." For all to read, in exquisite Greek lettering, his words take pride of place on the theatre's astonishing Archival Wall. During your walk round the site, the haunting cry from the poplar grove is that of a golden oriole. And the population of red squirrels around the Excavation House is something to marvel at! As at Sagalassos, there will always be something new to see. Access to the sumptuous Sebasteion sculptures in the depot is restricted until a new museum has been built to display them. But the new work in and around the huge and impressive **Stadium** is easily accessible. Seek out the graffiti, which include "game boards" on the upper seats.

Day 5: Aphrodisias to Kekova via Cibrya

Cibrya was once an important iron-age mining town, standing above a great lake. Nowadays its ruins melt into a tired and eroded landscape above a rich alluvial plain. In spring the city is a botanist's paradise. Wander through an ancient city awaiting excavation. Work on the **Roman stadium** has started, but you can still picnic discreetly within it before walking up the hill towards the agora.

The journey to Kekova is down the **Xanthus valley**. If botanically minded, make your visit in early spring. Archaeologically, from Balbura to Patara, the valley is well-known: **Pinara**, **Sidyma**, which necessitates a significant detour, **Xanthus** and its sanctuary at **Letoon** and **Patara** (lots of new work by a Turkish archaeological team), to name but a few of the major sites. Do visit the Xanthus Room in the British Museum before or after your trip. And don't neglect **Tlos**, which also necessitates a detour. Like the other sites, it is well described in the guide books and it scores high marks for charm. There are a number of modest *pansiyons* on the sea both in Üçağız (ancient Teimiussa) and Kale (ancient Simena) though Kale remains more remote, being a four-kilometre walk or a ten-minute boat ride from Üçağız.

LEFT: AN ARISTOCRAT WEARING IN ROMAN TOGA AT THE AGORA GATE, APHRODISIAS. RIGHT: OIKOUMENIOUS, THE CITY GOVERNOR, 400AD

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY EXCAVATIONS AT APHRODISIAS

Day 6: Kekova

First a swim, if you didn't get one the evening before. Find a boat to take you to the top of the Kekova Sound and drop you at **Ramazan'ın yeri.** Ramazan and his family will fix you lunch while you walk across the isthmus to **Aperlae**. It has yet to be fully surveyed and there has been no excavation, except by tomb robbers. Some of the ruins are in the sea, the level of which has risen over the past two millennia. Climb up on the remains of ashlar walls to see the extent of the site. Your guess as to how it was will be as good as the next person's.

Day 8: Kale to Antalya via Arycanda and the Elmalı cedar forest

Whatever the time of the year **Arycanda** is as every bit as wonderful as it is cracked up to be in the guide books. The stadium at the top of the site, which had seating only along one side, is particularly interesting. Get there soon to see the theatre, before further falls from the overhanging mountain destroy the already seriously damaged seating. On the drive to Antalya in November, no forester would mind your collecting a handful of seed and cones from beneath the spreading arms of the great junipers, black pines and cedars along the way.

Day 9: Antalya

Any wide sweep of history takes time to absorb. There is no better haven of peace for a morning's consolidation than the garden of the first-class **Antalya Museum**. Don't miss the Kumluca silver horde or the impressive new Perge room. Antalya itself is within easy drive not only of **Perge** but of **Termessus**, the only Pamphylian city to resist Alexander the Great, as well as **Aspendos**, with its wonderfully preserved theatre, and **Side**, fighting for survival from over-development and popular tourism. If you know the major sites already, head for **Selge**, whose mountainous setting is an intimate version of Sagalassos. Hordes of children, both pestilential and charming, will guide you to the theatre. If you are out of luck, the guardian lady will descend on you for entrance tickets. ◆

PLACES TO STAY ALONG THE ROUTE

For 5-star hotels in Ankara and Konya, see the Luxury Hotel Directory on page 127. For small hotel ideas, try *The Little Hotel Book*, by Sevan and Müjde Nişanyan (published annually) or Alasadair Sawday's *Turkey: Special Places to Stay*, by the same authors; and for foot paths, Kate Clow's two walking guides: *The Lycian Way*, and *St Paul Trail* (www.cornucopia.net). The following privately owned hotels along the route are recommended.

Ankara: within the walls of the citadel, Angora House, Kalekapısı Sok 16, Ankara (6 rooms); tel +90-312 309 8380, fax /309 8331; angora@smallhotels.com.tr

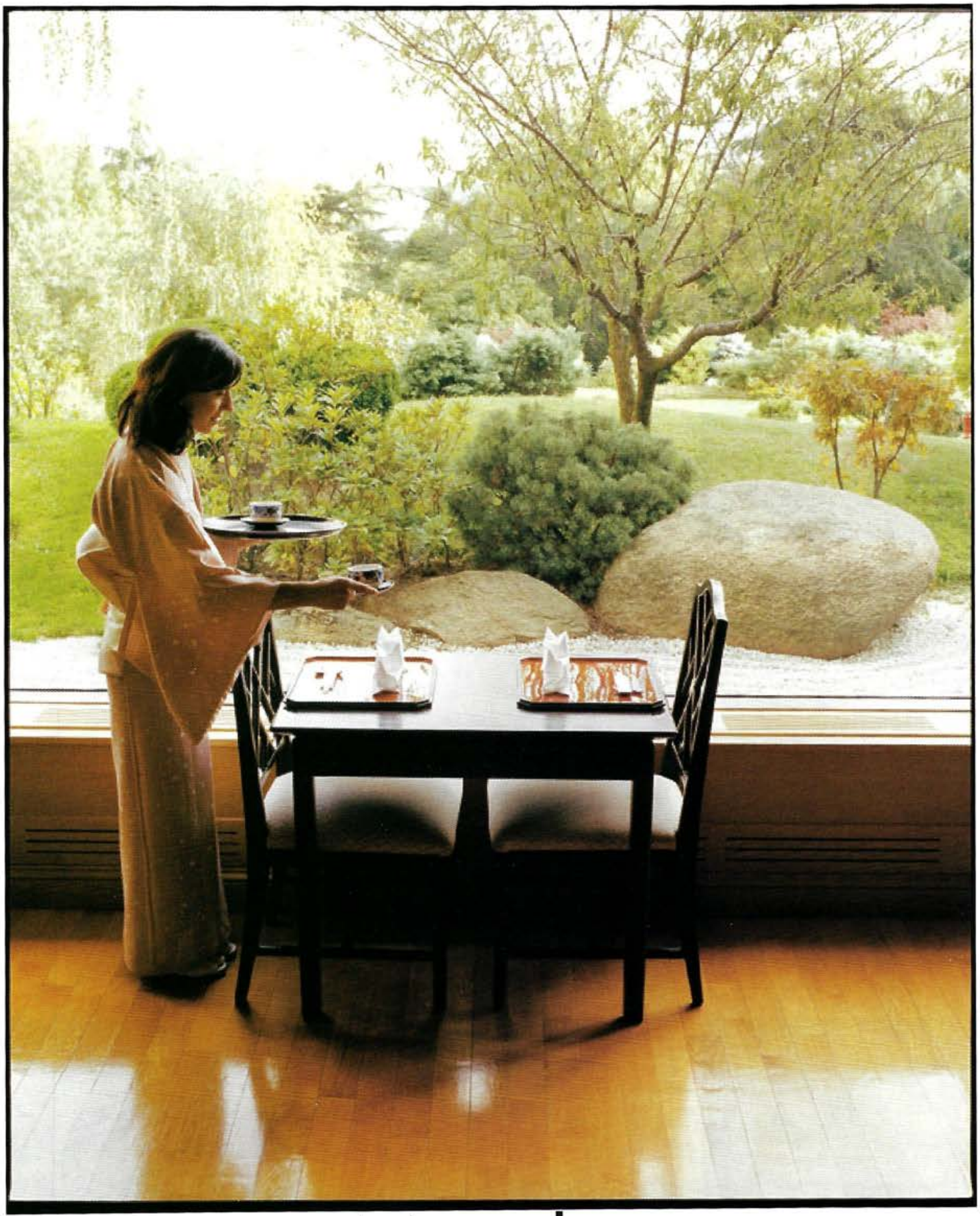
Konya: overlooking Mevlana's tekke in central Konya, Balıkçılar Hotel, Mevlana Karşısı; tel +90-332 350 9470, fax /351 3259; www.balikcilar.com. (The Dedeman chain have also opened a giant new luxury hotel in Konya, tel +90 332 221 6600; www.dedeman.com)

Eğirdir: overlooking the lake, a stone's throw away from the Derya restaurant where lake fish is usually on the menu, Hotel Apostel; tel +90- 246 311 5451 or /311 5452, fax /311 5433

Aphrodisias/Geyre Köyü: on the Karacasu road overlooking Aphrodisias' Roman Stadium, Aphrodisias Hotel; tel +90-256 448 8422. The Anatolya Restaurants provides excellent lunch; tel +90-256 448 8138; anatolya@anatoliaturizm.com.tr

Kekova: either the Kale Pansiyon or Nesrin's Bademli Ev (see *The Little Hotel Book*)

Antalya: in the old Kaleiçi district, a 19th-century merchant's house, Atelye Pansiyon (tel +90-242 241 6416, fax /241 2848), is cheaper than the rebuilt Marina Hotel nearby (tel +90-242 247 5490, fax /241 1765). Also good is the Sabah Pansiyon by the Kesik Minare; tel +90-242 247 5345



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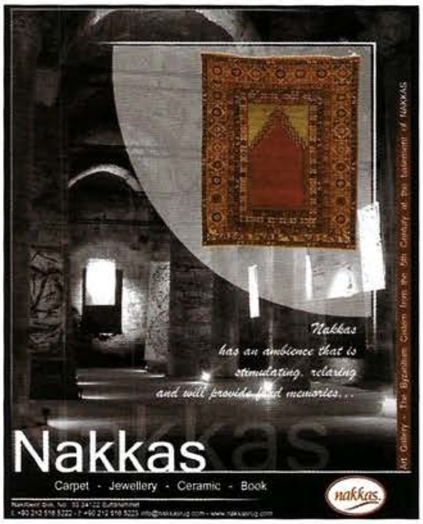
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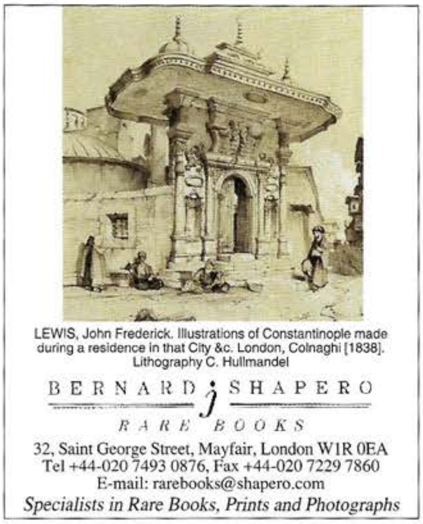
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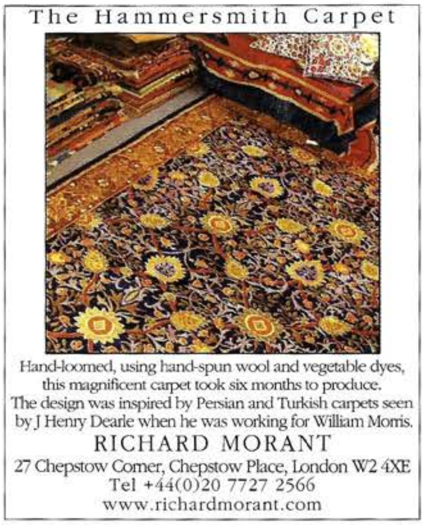
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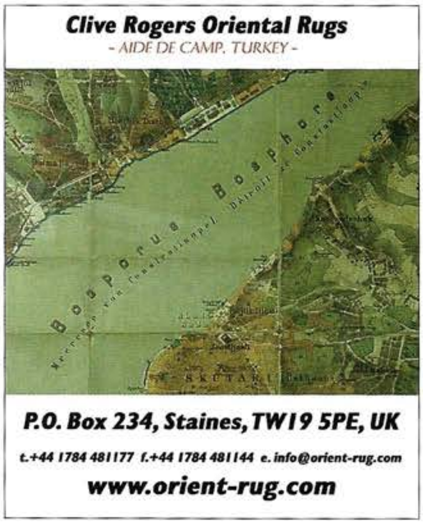
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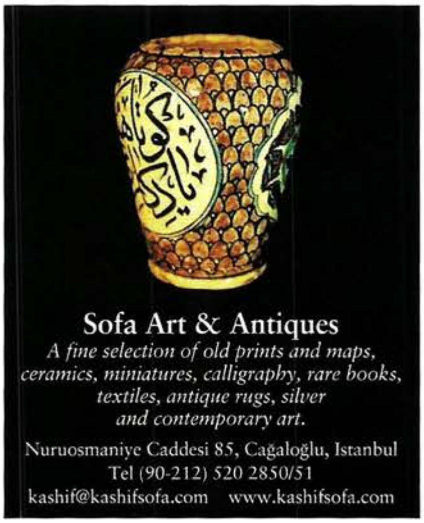
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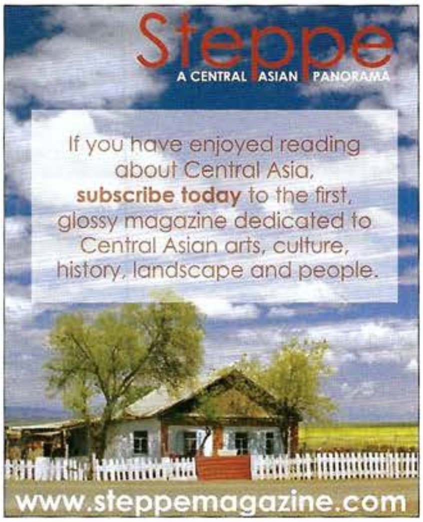
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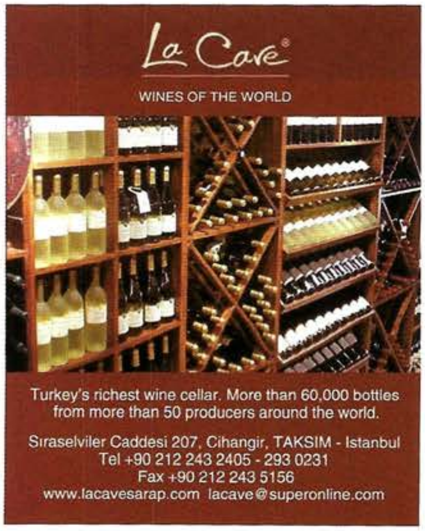
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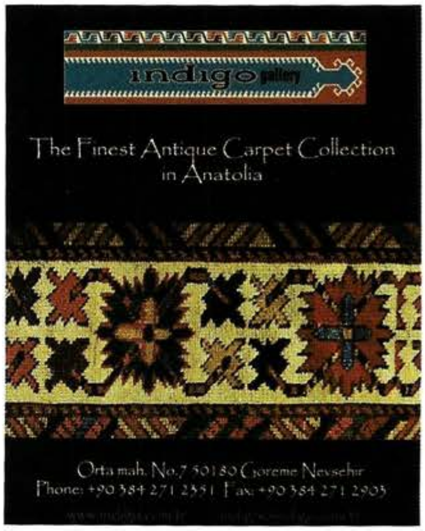
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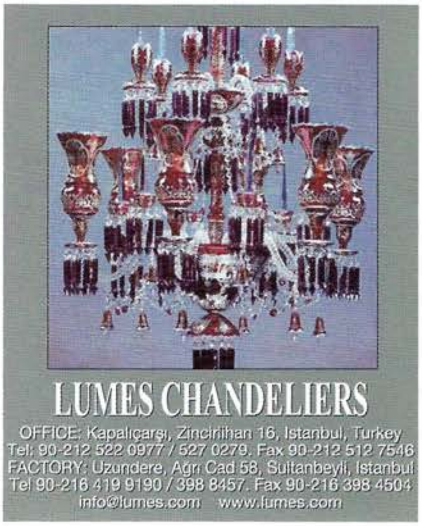

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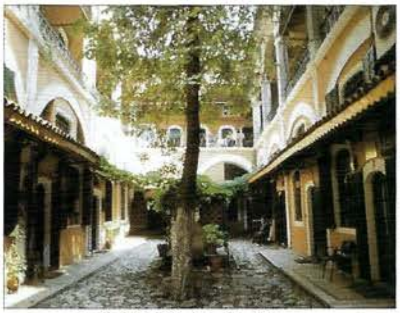

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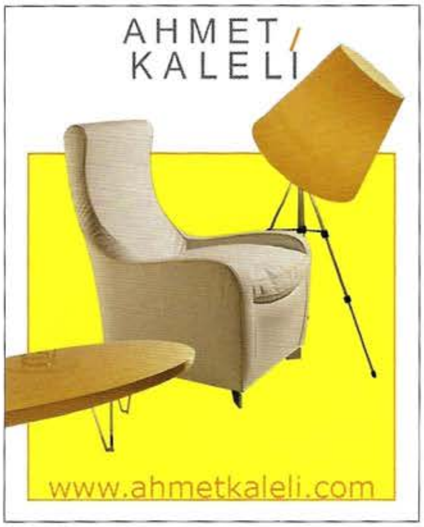

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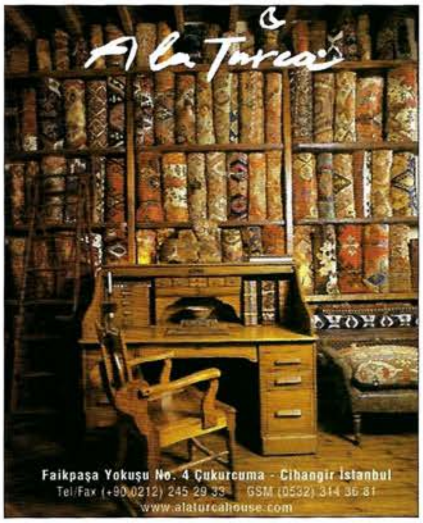

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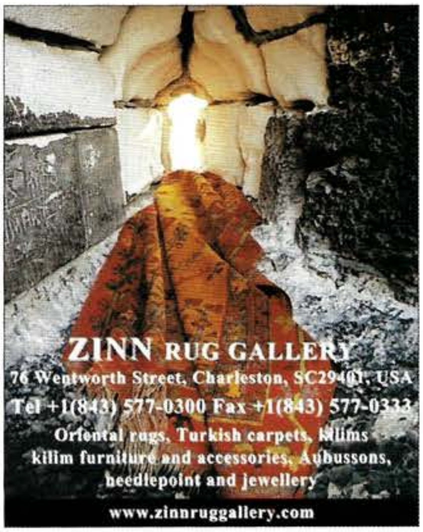

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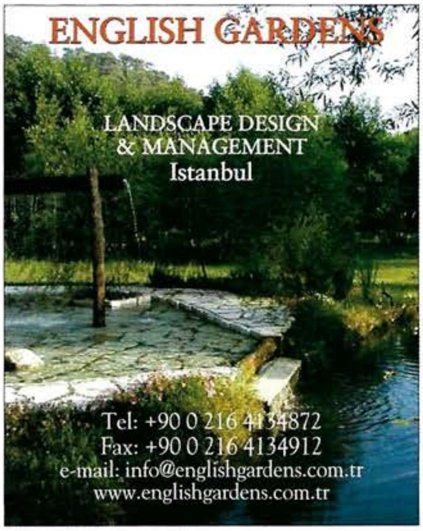

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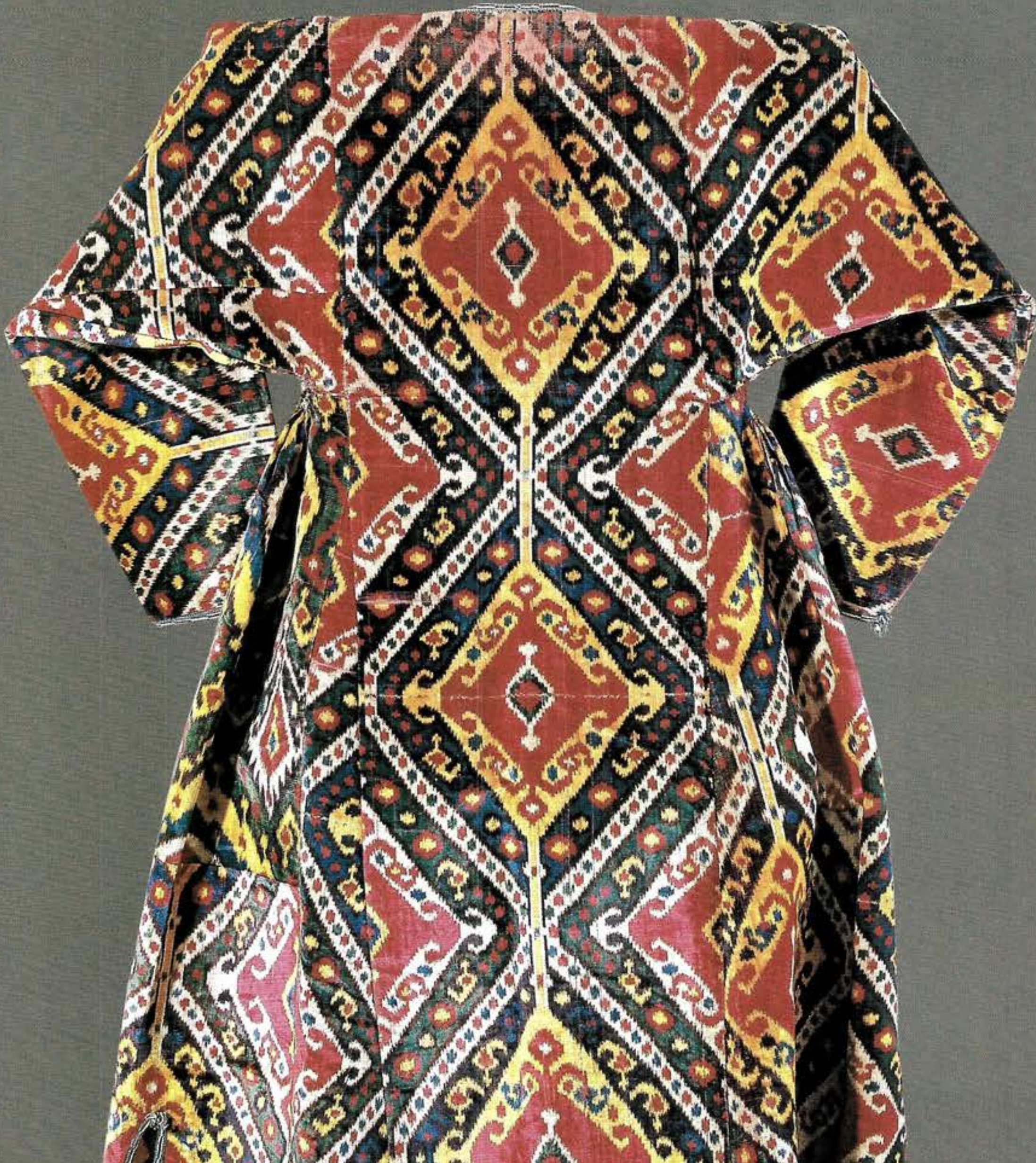

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VILLAGE VOICES

Fragrant summer evenings sitting by the lake, modern monstrosities taking over the town, a glorious past revealing itself, and an unwelcome djinn to be sent packing... Azize Ethem continues her Iznik diary

Long hot daze

It has been a long hot summer with a constant stream of guests. Drew, a friend of our daughter Sara, arrived from London on his motorbike. He is riding to Singapore, so afternoons were spent tuning his and Selim's machines and evenings poring over maps and sharing biker stories. The pair of them are off to bike along Turkey's southern coast and, while Selim makes his way home, Drew will ride on through Syria.

Zeki Fındıkoğlu, the charmingly eccentric Turkish artist, spent a lot of time gleaning boat-building advice from Selim. Rather than start by building a small rowing boat, Zeki plunged into the construction of a ten-metre cabin cruiser. He got bored with the tedious job of screwing planks together so resorted to large nails that poke an inch or so through the hull. All the gaps which shouldn't have happened have been plugged with that liquid foam that comes in spray cans. Zeki has announced that the launch will not be until next summer, but we've been told he had his cousin drag the boat behind his tractor into the lake, then quickly out again, just to see if it would float. We will have to wait until next year to see just how long it will stay above water.

Living on the shore of the lake, we are fortunate to get an evening breeze and to sit in the pergola with the scent of the moonflowers and nicotiana is wonderful. City friends marvel at the star-studded sky and all comment on the silence.

The trouble with trendy

Things one would never expect to happen in Iznik have been have been occurring at a disturbing rate. One of the nicest things about our town was the certainty that nothing changed. A new mayor would improve services and be highly visible for a while after his election, but, as this happened with every fresh incumbent, that didn't really count as change. After the supermarket chains and the one-lira stores discovered us, everything settled down again. But since spring a spate of events has had us all a bit nervous. Unimportant or trivial to you maybe, but unsettling to us locals.

Driving into town I spied teams of workers erecting those imitation ye-olde-fashioned iron lampstands. I didn't really think much about it. Dodging the motorscooters, I hadn't noticed the four hooks at the top of the posts. A few days later I not only noticed the hooks, but what was hanging from them was so awful I had to pull into the curb and do some serious deep-breathing exercises. Each post sported four large clumps of artificial flowers resembling nothing found in nature. Huge fluorescent bunches in every colour available at the Wednesday market swayed in the breeze. With not a hint of foliage, an acid-yellow clump teamed up with purple, orange and what looked like a bouquet of lime-green lavatory brushes. Rumour has it that the mayor was besieged by irate shopkeepers, with one man threatening to chop down the lot. Whatever the truth, the Technicolor monstrosities have gone and, after a dismal attempt to have live plants adorn the posts, they now stand empty.

Not to be beaten, the mayor has had a football-stadium-lamp-thingie erected in the centre of the town roundabout. Towering from on high, the crossroads are floodlit at night. As it leans slightly to the south, we all await the day it falls onto the local courthouse.

In late spring a very slick salesman visited the town and sold over a dozen shopkeepers the very latest in video surveillance equipment. For weeks one couldn't get served, as the staff were too busy watching the customers on screens.

I am always whingeing about Iznik pedestrians and seriously visually impaired drivers, but things have got worse. Chinese motorscooters have arrived at the local Moped shops. These trendy-looking machines are so cheap that it is now possible for anyone to buy one. And buy them they have – hundreds of them zoom around town, adding to the mayhem caused by the repaving of the main street. Even the revamping of the road is bucking tradition. Iznik authorities always dig up the road in midwinter, so to have roadworks in summer is another change to the natural order of things.

Our local grocer, who had not done anything to update his shop for thirty years, suddenly ripped out all the fittings and reopened with gleaming mazes of aisles, a barcode machine – and security cameras, of course. A first for Iznik are the automatic doors which little old ladies are convinced will chop them in half.

The one wonderful change is the completion of the ringroad to send trucks on their way without clogging up the centre of town. I will now be able to extricate my bicycle from the corner of the shed and ride with no fear of being squished by huge speeding lorries.

The most disturbing event has been the multiple sightings of women driving tractors, often seen in the south of Turkey but never before in Iznik. Here a woman's place is in the trailer. Sometimes they are permitted to perch precariously on the front mudguard, but never, never, actually behind the wheel. God only knows what will happen next.

Buried treasure

Each summer we have two teams of archaeologists arrive to excavate the theatre and the old Iznik tile kilns. The kiln crew do not allow visitors and work behind a wall with a locked gate, but Dr Bedri Yalman and his team of students from Bursa welcome visitors to the theatre. Dating back nearly 2,000 years, the theatre has had many alterations and additions over the centuries. Perhaps due to plague or war at some time in the Middle Ages, it was used as a mass burial site. I find it quite disturbing to see the thick layer of bones where a hillside has been excavated... so much history with so many unknown stories.

This year a third group has started work on a small Turkish bath. This dilapidated building, with its one dome, has had its sign, "*Bat Hof*

Muradll", removed, and hopefully when they get round to erecting a new one it will read: "Bath of Murad II". A pair of small back hoes was brought in and, lo and behold, what we all thought was the half-buried window has turned out to be a huge door. Presumably very gently, the machines dug down twenty feet, and a second large dome with eight smaller domes have emerged from under the layers of soil. They did a sterling job and it is now down to the archaeologists to painstakingly finish the work with their brushes and trowels.

Peasant trap

Iznik does not have sandy beaches, so the mass-market tourist companies have no desire to bring groups to our town. This means we have no Turkish-carpet shops, no leather-jacket outlets and no restaurants advertising English breakfasts. The few foreign tourists we get are quiet and well behaved people. Most of the outsiders who arrive in the summer are from Istanbul or Ankara. While many of the summer Turks blend into Iznik life, there is a group who overwhelm the locals. They drive huge, gleaming all-terrain vehicles which have never diverged from paved roads. In a town where the majority of women are headscarved and, in heat or cold, favour their long, drab coats, these summer women cause quite a stir. Botox seems to be compulsory this summer and groups of females, all with bee-stung lips and tanned to the shade of a well cooked kipper, clog the hairdressers' salons. Young city women, skimpily clad, with cleavage fore and aft, complain that the local lads stare at them. At the bank, when Selim asked a city man to join the end of the queue rather than bulldoze his way to the front, the offender's wife, looking directly at my husband, commented that peasants were revolting. The poor woman had no idea why even the bank staff laughed.

The best of bad luck

Oh, for the quiet life of the country! Yesterday my cellphone died. It lives in my handbag and is only there for emergencies. It never rings as nobody has the number, and I have to admit the only time I have had a full-blown emergency the wretched thing was out of the range of the signal and refused to work. But it has become an important handbag accessory and, like a lucky rabbit's foot, it makes me feel safe.

Selim drove me to town to have a whizzkid fiddle with it. On one of the detours to avoid the roadworks the sturdy vehicle in front of us unexpectedly came to an abrupt halt. We stopped without mishap when suddenly the car in front reversed at speed into us. Next thing there was the usual traffic-accident crowd. One kindly woman collected all the glass from the headlamps and passed it through the window to me. What I was supposed to do with it I don't know. The nice man at the car-repair shop drove us into town, and when a child behind the counter in the cellphone shop pressed a few buttons the thing came back to life. He then spent ten minutes trying to sell me a phone that as well as taking photos could do everything except wash dishes. It was so small I would need a magnifying glass to make out the numbers.

By the time we sat down at the ice-cream shop everyone knew we'd had a car accident. The lad who had hit us didn't want his father to know he had reversed into our car. Fat chance, I would have thought – his father had probably got the

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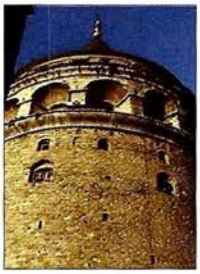

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news before we reached the repair shop. Getting into a taxi we had to decamp when the driver couldn't get it to start. I was rather pleased: bad things always happen in threes, so our bout of bad luck has run its course.

Time for a djinn and tonic?

I have never been superstitious. The fact that I would never walk under a ladder or indulge in a bungee-jumping session on Friday the 13th is prudent, not superstitious. On a trip to the fishing-tackle shop recently I noticed a group of young students buying what looked like fishing weights. But the small slugs of lead had no hole to thread a line through and, curious, I asked what they were for. I was told by one of the girls that there was a posse of djinns living in their dormitory. The lead is melted and poured into a container of water, the hissing and spitting drives out evil spirits immediately. The shop-owner helpfully told me I could buy, at a very reasonable price, a special lead-melting pot. My mother would have placed bowls of rock-salt around to cleanse the room and burnt some sage, but molten lead spitting dangerously sounds a far more potent recipe.

This episode prompted me to start exploring Turkish superstitions. Everyone I asked had a long list, and I found it interesting that many of them were identical to the old wives' tales of my very English grandmother. A broken mirror brings bad luck; the ritual of handing a knife or scissors to someone; and a four-leaf clover brings good luck. When I was a child, a Maori told me that an owl roosting and hooting close to one's home signified that death was soon to visit the house, so it was somewhat unsettling to find that Turkish folklore has the same warning.

I began to think the Turks were the most superstitious lot on God's earth, and a quick look on the web showed that I was not the only one to come to that conclusion. The Turkish Ministry of Culture's website had a whole section on the subject.

It was only after trawling through pages of weird Turkish superstitions that I had the wit to do the same thing for British old wives' tales. It was heartening to find web pages galore: there were hundreds of weird and wonderful ways to avoid the wrath of the supernatural. But the Turks won hands down when it came to the most outlandish. For instance: "If an oleaster shoot, stork excrement and a blue bead are tied together and placed under the armpit, that person will not be affected by the evil eye." The wild olive twig and the blue bead are not going to be a problem, but short of climbing the mosque dome to the nest, the stork part of the recipe is a challenge.

The bad news

As I write this, Selim is watching the news. He is always watching the news since the Israeli-Lebanon flare-up began. With Drew riding his motorbike through Afghanistan, and family in Lebanon and friends in Israel, it is all a terrible worry. Aunt Yvette won't leave her apartment in Beirut – aged 78 she has to walk down ten flights of stairs since the lift packed up. Her sons wanted her to join them in France, we wanted her here, but the fact that squatters would take over her home kept her in the city. At this stage it is too late for her to leave anyway. ◆

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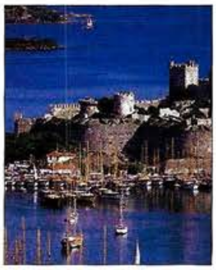

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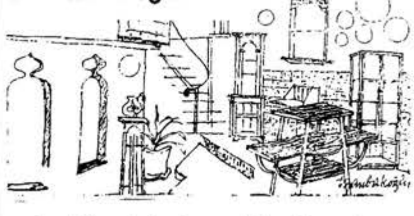

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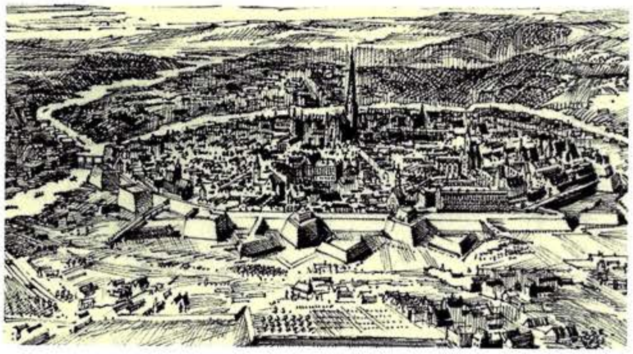

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Dining at the palace

BY ANDREW FINKEL

A shudder went through Proust's body as he gobbled up his madeleines. I can't say that I react with the same physicality when faced with a piece of walnut-stuffed baklava, but I do take nostalgic pleasure in stopping at **Konyalı**, opposite Sirkeci Station, where I first tasted that particular treat. What was once a restaurant with waiters and white tablecloths is now a fast-food counter, but there are tasty things on offer like puff-pastry *talâş böreği* (much better than Cornish pasties) and especially gooey caramelised *kazan dibi*, the milky pudding thickened with bits of chicken breast – the idea of which some unschooled foreign palates find harder to imagine than deep-fried scorpion.

Konyalı restaurants have spread as a chain – there is a good one in Levent – and are proof that much of Turkish cuisine is already fast, albeit infinitely more delicious and nutritious than a lard-packed mega-burger. So I was looking forward to lunch with the new director of the Topkapı Palace Museum at Konyalı's flagship restaurant, a place where I had advised generations of visitors to break for lunch. It is on a scenic terrace at the back of the museum, and the guest book has been variously inscribed by Elizabeth R and Haile Selassie.

I would still recommend dining with Ilber Ortaylı, who has taken over from Filiz Çağman in running this most complicated of museums, which receives some two million visitors a years. Prof Ortaylı is as expansive as the royal estate over which he now rules. He is full of humour and historical insight and possesses the ability to dismiss an event, a person, probably an entire army with a blisteringly rude aside. His domains are set to grow if the train tracks to the soon-to-be-discarded Sirkeci Station are reincorporated into the palace grounds.

Ilber Ortaylı is full of praise for his predecessor, "a brilliant scholar", but under no illusion of the problems he has inherited – most of them from lack of a proper budget. Filiz Çağman was particularly clever at getting private donors to undertake good works in the palace: a detergent company paid to give the walls a good scrub, and jewellery retailers sponsored the displays within the Treasury. Yet many of the Topkapı's problems are buried where commercial sponsors see little mileage. Who wants their name associated with setting the storerooms in order? Many of the buildings, including the famous library, are in need of repair, but that involves the expensive relocation of priceless manuscripts. The 1940s restoration of the palace kitchens should be redone.

And how about the Konyalı kitchen? It seemed bad manners to confront Ilber Ortaylı with the slipping standards of the palace canteen. The cooking does not venture above the merely competent, presumably safe in the knowledge that its clientele have nowhere else to go and are unlikely to return next week. The sit-down restaurant is also expensive. Having said that, the baklava was still tasty.

Fashion is where footballers' wives demand to be taken on a Saturday night. Style is where Orhan Pamuk's publishers entertain Euro-MPs after their author's trial. **Cezayir** has style. The restaurant sits in post-colonial defiance at the top of Cezayir (Algeria) Street – renamed Fransız Sokak – in the handsome premises of what when it was built in 1901 was an Italian workers' institute.

I have already described chef Dilara Erbay's previous establishment, which went under the slightly skittish name of Abracadabra Dilara, as having all the virtues you'd expect of dinner at a friend's house. Cezayir has more of an air of a relaxed members' club, and it seems that many of its customers spend as many nights there as not. There is a bar and a café with Starbucks-style leather sofas, and while most of the habitués are thirty-something, the music genuflects with the odd Bob Dylan song to the age and gravitas of some of the old folk wandering in. The encaustic tile floor gives a patina of age, and there is a more (but not very) formal dining room with a chandelier and bold green walls. There wasn't a reservation to be had on the Saturday night I went, and we made do eating at a table in the bar.

The food – well, it was better at Abracadabra, where you felt Dilara had time to fuss over details. Cezayir is a much grander establishment and a touch formulaic. It is, however, in the attractive genre of "New Turkish Cooking" – an attempt to use good local ingredients and techniques to imaginative ends (the paella made with bulgur pilav instead of rice is actively nice) or to add an unexpected flavour to a well-known standard (like ginger to the baked lamb). There is an array of fresh pasta dishes – not just Italian but Turkish *mantı* filled with duck. Other things, like the *pastırma börek* pastry sticks with a sour fruit dip, or Jerusalem artichokes with mustard sauce, sound more interesting than they are.

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Battle of the bulge

ON THE SECOND LEG OF THEIR WINTER JOURNEY TO EASTERN TURKEY, CHRISTOPHER AND FRANCES RYAN FEAST IN URFA AND MARDIN

GLORIOUS URFA

We were warming to the East, as the East warmed us. A night bus brought us to *Şanlı Urfa*, "Glorious Urfa", city of Abraham, the prophet Job, holy fish and tumbling pigeons worth thousands of dollars. Halim, our guide, knows the best places to lunch.

Gülizar Konukevi is a restaurant and hotel occupying an old Armenian house just a short way from the bazaar. A stone building surrounds a courtyard, with an Escher-like warren of steps leading up and down to different eating areas: to *sofra*-style eating in divan-furnished rooms, to tables on the terraces, or to a shaded *eyvan* (open-arched portico). We feast on *lebeni çorbası*, a thick, chilled soup of yoghurt, barley and chickpeas. This is followed by *içli köfte*, little torpedoes of minced lamb spiced with cinnamon, wrapped in a paste of bulgur

ISTANBUL RESTAURANTS

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The Covered Bazaar, Istanbul
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Tel (212) 528 1613
fescafe@superonline.com
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CAFE SUISSE
Swissôtel The Bosphorus, Istanbul
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DIVAN
Divan Hotel, Taksim, Istanbul
Tel (212) 231 4100
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HACIBEY
Teşvikiye Cd 156, Teşvikiye, Istanbul
Tel (212) 232 7134
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The Kitchen of Bua Khao
Meşrutiyet Cad 134, Beyoğlu, Istanbul
Tel (212) 245 5725 or 245 5726
www.perathai.com
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PANORAMA
The Marmara Istanbul Hotel
Tel (212) 251 4696
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REJANS
Olivya Geçidi 17, Istiklâl Cad
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and minced meat and fried. The main course is *satır et,* "cleavered meat", a kind of lamb *köfte* burger that comes with various flat breads. Pudding is *sillik*, a syrupy pancake filled with crushed walnuts and pistachios.

Altınşiş (The Golden Skewer) is a great kebab shop on Urfa's main drag. Here, for £2.50, you will be served a glimmering chrome tray, eight inches by twelve, bearing a veritable arsenal of Urfa's greatest weapons in the battle of the Eastern Turkish bulge. This is *siverek kebab*. We regard it as a fortress to be stormed.

Footsoldiers of heaped bunches of parsley, a bund of sliced raw onion sprinkled with *sumak*, and a minefield of bulgur with explosively hot *sivri* peppers like green bazookas lure us like cannon-fodder to within the outer defences. From here we are in range of a vast battery of *patlıcan* kebab, a steel skewer holding barrels of roasted aubergine separated by fat wads of mincemeat.

Beyond lie the big guns, two solid grilled *şiş köfte*, running from edge to edge of the platter. Plump tomatoes with buttery glazes lie scattered across the field of battle like wounded redcoats. We dig in for a long campaign. But reinforcements appear, as plates of flat bread, bowls of yoghurt and salad line up along the edge of the table.

Like so many who have hungrily eyed the riches of the East, we are eventually forced into an ignoble retreat, and stagger away from the table, the walking wounded.

Another evening in Urfa sees us at **Sembol Ciğer Salonu,** a little further up Sarayönü Caddesi towards the famous Urfa bazaar. Their speciality is liver *(ciğer)* kebab. It is served with a mixed chopped salad, flat "wrap" bread and parsley, mint and onions. With it comes a dish of shallots, skewered and grilled in their skins: squeeze it from one end and the skinned shallot pops out at the other. Very sweet – but the shallots of Urfa have a mind of their own, and with little encouragement they shoot across the floor or into your neighbour's lap. The liver is sliced small, dusted with a mix of spices and grilled lightly. Perfect – and only £1.50 with a glass of *ayran* (yoghurt drink).

Dessert is a takeaway from **Hacı Baba** opposite. *Urfa kadayıf* is one of those unique, great tastes best had in its place of origin: totally fresh, crisp, finer-than-shredded-wheat pastry baked to a golden crust, spread with *kaymak* (clotted cream) and ground pistachios – served with a little plastic bag of sugar syrup, so one can control the sweetness to one's (European) taste . A £1 portion is enough for two or three.

MARDIN AND THE FERTILE CRESCENT

A nocturnal arrival in Mardin is improved by the kindly attentions of the tourist police. Apologising for their fearsome submachine guns, they carry our bags, fat with textile purchases, uphill to what appears to be the only hotel in the old city. The **Erdoba Konak**, a restored nineteenth-century stone mansion, is expensive, but it is low season and the management are amenable to a little haggling. A "best price" is soon agreed. That settled, we are upgraded to the bridal suite, a complex of beautifully furnished rooms with a brass four-poster bed, a large anteroom with divans spread with thick Anatolian carpets, and a wide balcony looking south over the green plains of the Fertile Crescent. It is in a separate building, very private, and – along with a single police guard – we have it to ourselves.

Erdoba Konak's restaurant is surprisingly good. We dine for £5 a head on lentil soup, mixed mezes, excellent *pirzola* (grilled lamb chops) and *zerde*, a rather special rice pudding flavoured with saffron and rosewater.

In between visiting Syriac Orthodox monasteries, ancient mosques and coffee houses, strolling in orchards of almonds blossoming in spring sunshine, meeting goatherds and drinking milk fresh from the teat, and watching sunrises and sunsets from our bridal balcony, we do manage to find time to eat, twice, at Mardin's **Kebapcı Rıdo.**

Rıdo's kebab shop is one of those places that has made and maintained a reputation on a single dish – like Iskender's in Bursa, the original Sultanahmet Köftecisi in Istanbul, or the rice pudding shop at Hamsiköy. Or, in this case, two dishes, with a variation: *şiş kebab* or *şiş köfte*, the latter plain or spiced.

Rıdo's is a simple place – terrazzo floor, plastic marble tabletops – and the kitchen is right there as you enter: on your left, a wood-fired grill and oven, with meat-laden skewers smoking and sizzling; on your right, a refrigerated counter behind which, at two huge butcher's blocks, two generously built cooks have stripped a whole lamb carcase. Now each rolls briskly with an enormous blade up and down through a pile of white lamb fat and red flesh. Into the mix go salt, red-pepper paste, ground chillis and parsley. It is then made up on skewers by the cook, who deftly moulds the mince on the *kılıç* (sword), dipping his hands into an ancient clay urn of water to stop the mixture sticking to his fingers. Then the *ocakcıbaşı* places it on the grill. Some meat is kept in small pieces for *şiş* kebab.

The meal is simple perfection. We try all the variations, with salad, tea and a large bowl of *ayran* each. For two: £6.50. ◆

Gülizar Konukevi:
Kadıoğlu Mahallesi 22, Şanlıurfa;
+90-414 215 05 05
Altınşiş Et Lokantası: Sarayönü Caddesi, Köprübaşı, Sanmed Karşısı 140, Şanlıurfa;
+90-414 215 46 46
Sembol Ciğer Salonu:
Sarayönü Caddesi 16, Şanlıurfa;
+90-414 215 70 49
Hacı Baba Dondurma ve Kadayıf Salonu: Sarayönü Caddesi 73, Şanlıurfa; +90-414 215 20 41
Erdoba Konak: 1. Cadde 135, Mardin; +90-482 212 76 77
Kebabçı Rıdo: 1. Cadde 203, Mardin; +90-482 212 17 44

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www.swissotel.com ask-us.istanbul@swissotel.com

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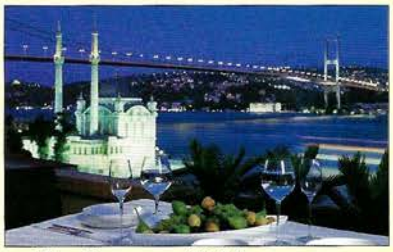

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www.lavanta.com; lavantahotel@compuserve.de

Tel 90-252 385 2167. Fax 90-252 385 2290

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Tel: 90-252 357 7417. Fax 90-252 357 7421

The Marmara Antalya

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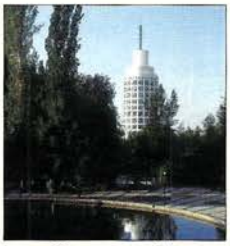
Tel 90-242 249 3600. Fax 90-242 316 8104



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info@museum-hotel.com www.museum-hotel.com

Tel 90-384 219 2220. Fax 90-384 219 2444

Queen Ada Hotel – Torba, Bodrum

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www.queenadahotel.com.tr info@queenadahotel.com.tr

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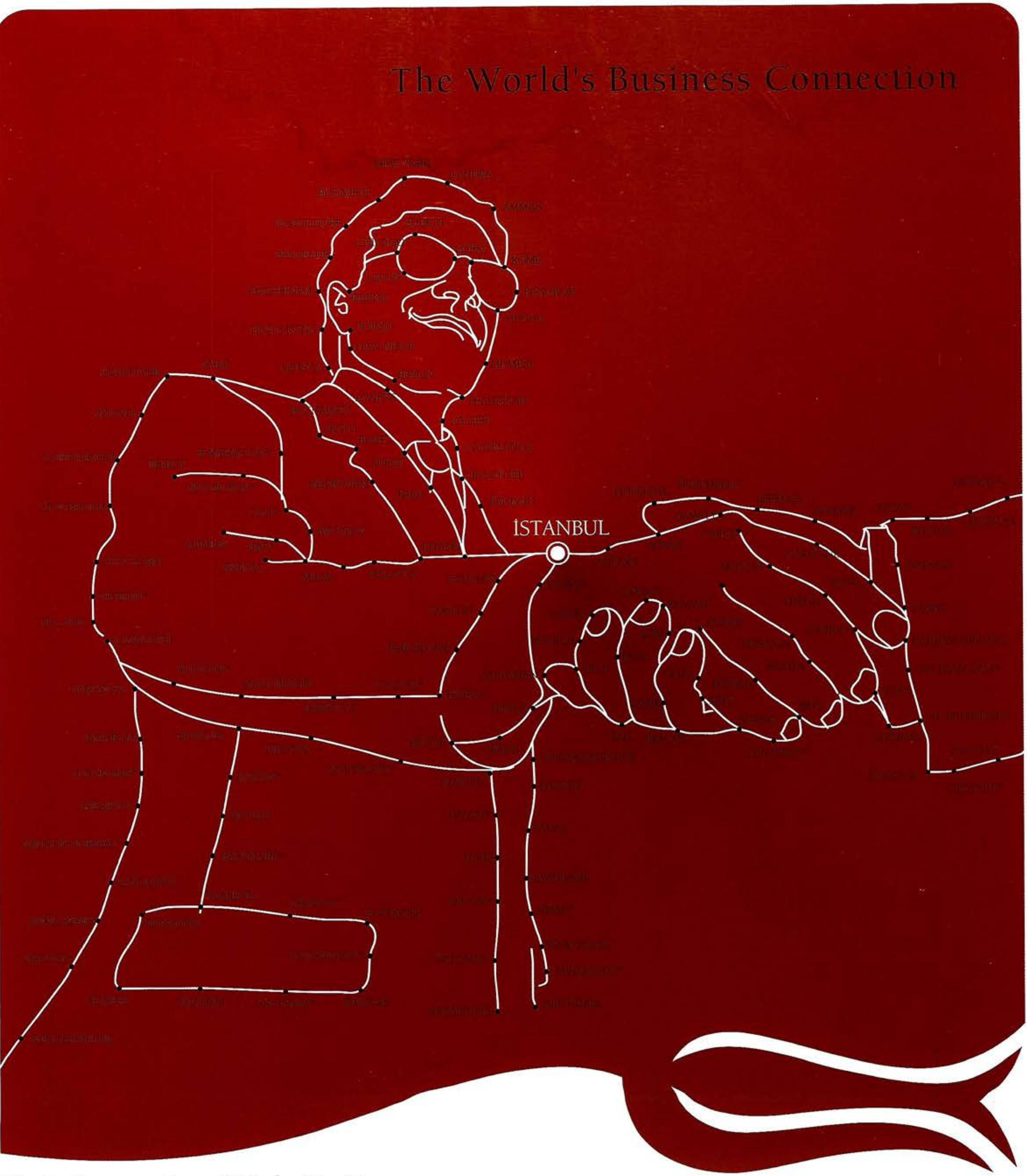
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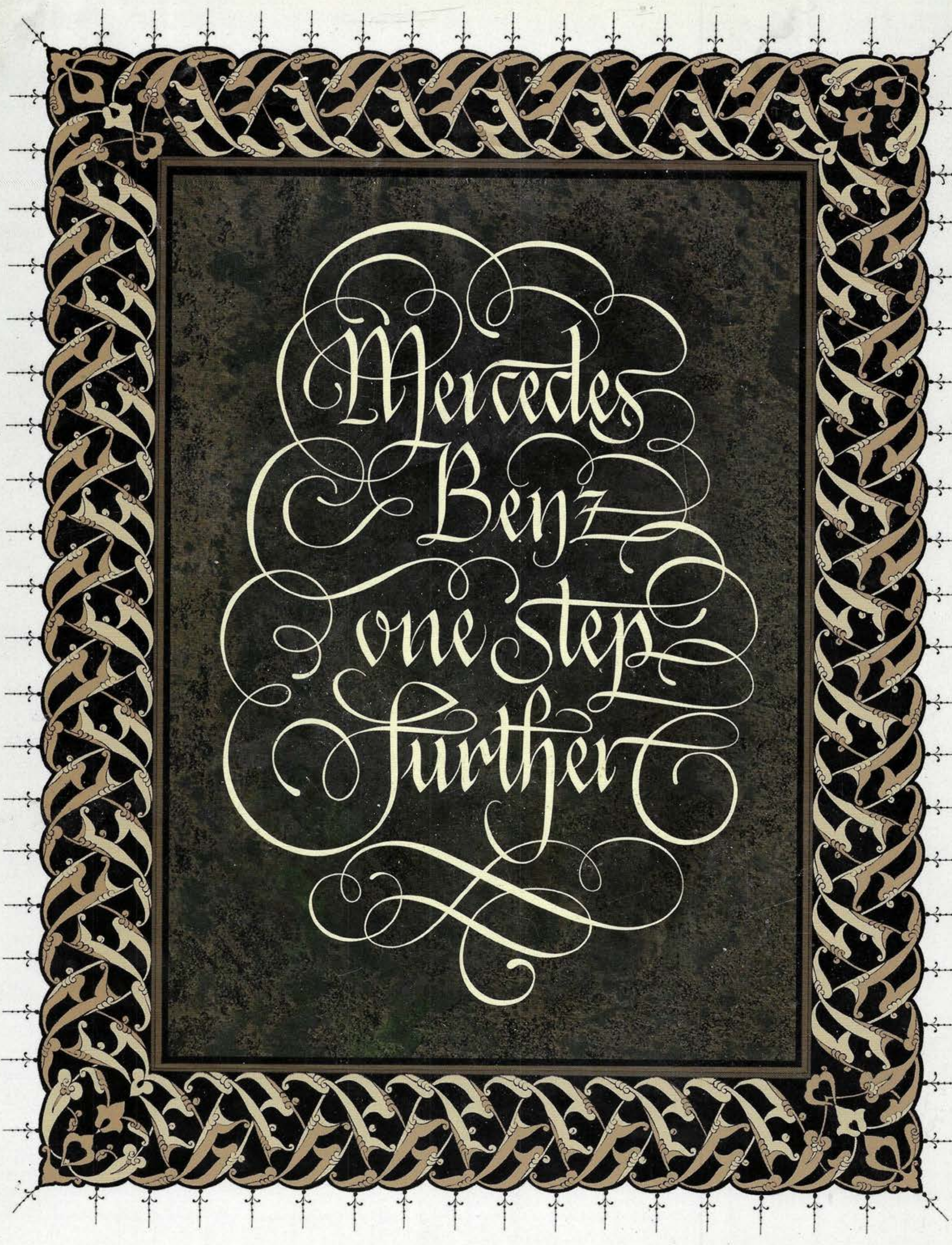
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